

## What If?

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## What If?

by [not\\_poignant](#)

### Summary

Jack sometimes finds his thoughts straying to Gwyn, King of the Seelie, and wonders how life is going for him, and Pitch has always been one to fantasise strongly and often about all the different ways he can bring Jack pleasure. So when Jack expresses a wish to see the King of the Seelie again, Pitch has a suggestion that will unite the three of them in ways Jack could never have foreseen.

### Notes

AU! It's not canonical in either the SALverse or the Fae Tales Verse, but I've lumped it in the SALverse because it's closest to that (it occurs about two or three years in the future after the conclusion). Basically I've twisted whatever I've needed to twist to make this work, lol. I've been meaning to write this for so long, and it's so good to finally sit down and write it. I hope you enjoy part one! :)

# Chapter 1

Jack ran his fingers along the silvery metal that coated his staff. He sat upon a drift of snow, Pitch nearby, buffing the edges of his axe as though they would have to fight enemies at any moment – which, Jack wanted to point out, was really not how things had gone for a *long* time. Pitch occasionally mumbled under his breath about how awful axes were in general.

It was funny, sometimes, but as Jack turned his staff and watched it catch the weak afternoon sun, winter's rays making it glitter but not warm, he realised he didn't want the reminder today about how he'd destroyed that sword. How he'd felt it was necessary.

He could even remember the look on Gwyn's face when he'd suggested it.

His fingers slipped into his pants pocket, found the charm that he'd never really had the heart to throw away, even though he was sure the magic had worn off at least a year ago. That, or Gwyn had just stopped answering once the year was up.

'Hey,' Jack called, 'do you think he thinks about us?'

'As ever,' Pitch called from where he was bent over the axe, 'your ability to start conversations without me is one of your finest gifts.'

'Gwyn,' Jack clarified. 'You know, the King of like...everything ever? Do you think he thinks about us?'

'I expect not,' Pitch said.

'You're like...token Seelie, and Court status, and I don't know, there was like a ton of stuff there that was pretty life-changing. Not just for *me*...'

Pitch straightened, shifted the axe and then leaned it against the side of his house. He stretched quietly, and then rolled his shoulders into a graceful shrug, walking over. Jack thought that if anyone had ever told him he was going to fall in love with someone that constantly looked like he was *stalking* everything, Jack would've laughed, once.

Now he just found it kind of hot.

'Maybe he does,' Pitch said. 'Are you feeling sad for him again? He is a competent fellow, of that I'm sure.'

'Yeah,' Jack said reluctantly. 'I dunno. I know he said all that crap about me being done with that world. And I know it's been ages. I just- Still think about it, still think about him. I know you say you don't mind, but you don't, right?'

'I am far from minding,' Pitch said, taking Jack's hand and lifting him from the snowdrift, Jack using the wind to keep himself in the air. Even though he could float at eye level with Pitch, he always hung just below, keeping a little of that height difference. It felt better that way. 'Do you want to invite him here?'

'What?' Jack said. 'He was pretty not into that.'

'I suspect he'd respond to a friendly invitation. He's Seelie, they have all sorts of rules about responding to invitations and formal etiquette and so on. And you forget, I can travel there at will –

I'm welcome in the Seelie Court at any time.'

'You'd do that?' Jack said. 'I mean- It's been ages.'

'He was my friend too, for a time,' Pitch said. Then his brow lifted and his lips lifted in a smirk. 'For a measure of the word 'friend.''

'Shit, I mean, if we do this – we're gonna end up fighting some war again or something. I'm not ready for that.' He laughed to indicate he was joking. Sort of joking.

Warm fingers brushed across his jaw and Jack leaned into them, unable to stop himself from smiling. Pitch's expression was serious again, but that wasn't frightening anymore – hadn't been in a long time.

'He can try,' Pitch said. 'But I think he'll find he won't get very far now that whatever conflicts he's fighting don't concern us. But I don't have to do this if you're not ready. We have time.'

*Time.*

Jack's lips pursed and then he placed his hands on Pitch's chest, over his black robe, and watched the ice spiral over the fabric. It calmed him to see that. The frond-like patterns interacting with the embroidered lunar alphabet, how well it all seemed to fit together.

'We've had time,' Jack said, meeting Pitch's eyes. 'Let's do it. What's the worst that could happen?'

'That, dear Jack, is what we call a *jinx*.'

\*

Jack had forgotten that strange light that surrounded the King of the Seelie. And he'd forgotten how imposing he was, even after so long living with Pitch – who was plenty imposing in his own way. Gwyn had to duck his head underneath the doorframe, when he was invited into Pitch's house in Kostroma. Jack saw the bottle of vodka Gwyn held in his hand and cringed. Maybe this wasn't such a good idea after all.

'It's the best,' Gwyn said, looking down at it, his forehead furrowing.

'Uh huh,' Jack said, staring at him. 'It like, totally doesn't remind me of both those times you basically you know, used alcohol to get your way when you were smooth-talking Ash. This isn't a set-up, is it?'

'Now, now,' Pitch said smoothly, taking the bottle of vodka from a chagrined Gwyn and clasping him warmly on the shoulder. 'I'm sure he meant nothing by it at all. Did you?'

'I don't cook,' Gwyn said, meeting Jack's eyes. 'I think it wrong to make servants cook for me so I can present it as a gift to others. So I...brought this. And it was *whiskey* last time, so I don't understand why vodka is a problem.'

Jack opened his mouth to say: *I'm so surprised*, but decided it wasn't worth it. Gwyn already looked horrified at the thought that he was there to manipulate them, which hopefully meant that he hadn't taken the invitation that way at all. So Jack made himself shrug, hopped up into the air and followed Pitch towards the large living room, a fire roaring in a huge hearth. Jack wished the house wasn't so warm, but – well, hospitality and all. When they'd been climbing the mountain together, to visit the Glasera, Gwyn hadn't really been a huge fan of the cold even if he could

handle it.

‘How is the Beacon?’ Gwyn said, following Jack down the corridor.

‘You know that’s what it’s called?’ Jack said, a rush of happiness filling him. ‘Really? And uh – Well, going well, I guess?’

‘It’s in the fae realm,’ Gwyn said mildly. ‘Fae tend to comment on an enduring ice lighthouse that appears in the middle of a forest. The name filtered through.’

‘Yeah,’ Jack said, looking over his shoulder and smiling. ‘Yeah, it’s good. I spend like, half my time there and half my time here and half my time – Wait, that’s not maths. Anyway, I sort of divide my time up around the place.’

Jack went over to the large sofa on its wooden supports, all the way on the other side of the room, as far from the fireplace as possible. Pitch was already rummaging around in one of his cabinets, looking for tumblers.

‘It’s the third one,’ Jack said, pointing his staff so that a little star of frost appeared on the right cabinet door.

‘Thank you for saving me a great deal of time,’ Pitch said, abandoning the other cabinet.

It was awkward. It was already awkward. It was night, and Pitch had an old record player upstairs, playing vinyl records he’d manage to scrounge up from second hand stores, and a lot of it wasn’t in English, and a great deal of it sounded like it had been made seventy years ago and then was recorded through a sock. If it had been just the two of them, Jack would be lounging, and Pitch would likely be reading a book, or making notations in one of his endless journals, or perfecting the fire – which was something he seemed to care about a lot. When Jack had called him a ‘fussy old man,’ Pitch had simply shrugged as if seeing nothing wrong with that comment.

Now, Jack sat stiffly on the sofa, and Gwyn stood awkwardly just before the doorway, and Pitch seemed oblivious to all of that.

‘So...’ Jack said, ‘how’s things in like...the Seelie world?’

‘Fine,’ Gwyn said.

‘Cool.’

‘And you?’ Gwyn said. ‘How are things with...the Guardians?’

‘Bunny is doing his own thing at the moment, he went ‘walkabout’ about six months ago and says it’ll help him make better eggs for everyone. Or something. Tooth is doing well. Working too hard, but she takes breaks sometimes. Sandy’s great. North’s good, we’re trying to get him to go out on dates, but he doesn’t like it very much.’

‘Matchmaking?’ Gwyn said, smiling hesitantly and walking a bit further into the room. In the end he perched on the edge of an armchair. The one Pitch never used. Jack wondered if Gwyn could tell somehow. With fae magic or something. If he just knew which places to avoid.

‘Sort of,’ Jack said. ‘I dunno, he’s lonelier than he admits.’

Gwyn nodded slowly, looking over at Pitch pouring three tumblers of vodka. Pitch gave everyone the same amount, and Jack stopped his nose from wrinkling. Try as he might, he couldn’t get the

hang of vodka. Though he supposed this one would probably be the very best he'd ever hate.

'He works too hard,' Pitch said, his voice deep and somehow soothing. Jack wanted Pitch to take over the whole conversation, run everything, because then this would all go as well as it possibly could, and Jack could apologise later for having this idea in the first place.

*I bet if I mention war though, he'll get all comfy or something.*

'I don't know him all that well,' Gwyn said, 'but it can't be easy, managing a feat like that for humans every year.'

'It's not,' Jack said, 'but he also does way more than he has to. And it's like – I dunno, I never used to think about it, but these days I think he's been – well I know loneliness better than most, right? I just think he knows it better than most too.'

Jack added ice to all three of the tumblers when Pitch brought them over. And then Pitch shared them out, Jack holding his and icing his glass and thinking that soon he would need to sip some of it and pretend that he liked it. Hospitality.

*Why did I think this was a good idea again? Why did I ever think he reminded me of Pitch? I can't believe that's the guy I kissed.*

Jack hid half his face behind the tumbler and looked away, because shit, he hadn't meant to think of that. It wasn't like Pitch hadn't ever brought it up again either. Pitch, it turned out, had a free-range mind that was heavily into fantasy, and 'what if' situations. What if Gwyn kissed you and I'd been there, kissing you too? What if you'd done more with him, what do you think that would have been like? What if I told you I liked it – the idea of you with him? Would that bother you?

It didn't really bother Jack, but it was strange, because all his life he'd been around jealous humans. Pitch's willingness to indulge both of their fantasy lives – well, it had kind of led to more than one night spent with Jack delirious with pleasure and Pitch murmuring 'what if' while bringing other fantasies into reality.

*Why am I thinking about this?*

Just as Pitch was settling down into his customary armchair, he hesitated and directed a look at Jack that said he *knew* what Jack was afraid of. And his lips didn't turn into a frown at all, but quirked into a smirk that was entirely devious, that had the words 'what if' written all over them.

*Oh screw everything. Screw living with someone who reads fear and screw this stupid night and-*

He drank two gulps of vodka, leaving him with very little left in the tumbler, and a weird, smooth sensation of something coating his throat and warming him. He coughed once, and then at Gwyn's expectant look said:

'S' nice.'

'Good,' Gwyn said, face brightening. 'Good. And you, Pitch? How have matters been? You know, if you ever feel an itch to get back into the military, or even lead again-'

'I rather enjoy the feeling of being put out to pasture, actually,' Pitch said, making a show of leaning back in his chair. He sipped at the vodka and closed his eyes in appreciation, and Jack just didn't get it. So it was smooth. And warming. So what? 'And you? No chance of retiring from Kingship any time soon, I imagine?'

‘No,’ Gwyn said, turning the tumblr in his fingers. ‘It’s decades away before it can even be considered, and no suitable replacement. But I’ve been keeping busy. The fae do like to go to war with each other. There’s always something to deal with. Nothing I can’t manage though, nothing that concerns the Guardians or either of you, so you need not fear that I’m here on some recruitment drive.’ Gwyn looked up at Jack through his lashes, smiling ruefully. ‘I’m sure you thought it.’

‘I’m pretty sure I’m gonna keep on thinking it,’ Jack said. ‘You’re crafty as hell.’

Gwyn chuckled softly, finally taking a sip of the vodka. He then set it down on the floor beside him, threaded his fingers together, looked around the lounge. Jack wasn’t surprised at how out of place he looked. He’d learned that Gwyn never seemed to do great in social environments, even back when Jack had seen him in the Seelie Court.

‘So you consider yourself retired,’ Gwyn said, intending the statement for Pitch. ‘Do you still train?’

‘Of course,’ Pitch said, ‘I’m not enfeebled in my dotage. If you’re offering to spar…’

Gwyn shrugged as though it hadn’t occurred to him, but Jack saw through it and couldn’t help the faint snort he made from his side of the lounge. When Gwyn looked at him, Jack looked away and couldn’t quite wipe the smile off his face.

Pitch laughed quietly, and Jack’s heart still flip-flopped when he heard that sound. He’d gotten awfully used to the feeling of adrenaline rushing through his body, living with Pitch. The guy was a monster – a fan of jump-scares, of stalking through the dark, of shouting ‘boo!’ when someone least expected it. Now that he didn’t seem to want to harass children anymore, he put a considerable amount of energy into scaring the crap out of Jack and the other Guardians.

That quiet laughter though… Jack was used to hearing that in other situations. Sometimes with rope securing his body. Sometimes when all the lights were off and there were only two golden points of light – Pitch’s eyes watching him from a corner of the room, waiting to strike.

‘I’d be happy to,’ Pitch said, ‘for all of Jack’s *interjection* to the contrary. He and I sometimes train together, but I’d welcome someone with your level of martial experience. If, of course, you can drag yourself away.’

‘Yes,’ Gwyn said, gaze lingering on Jack before returning to Pitch’s again. ‘I’d…like that. You have techniques I’m unfamiliar with. There was never enough time to learn them.’

‘We were always focused on learning that light,’ Pitch said quietly.

‘I’m certain I can’t make it anymore,’ Gwyn said, pushing back into his chair a little, finally looking like he was starting to get comfortable. ‘It never came naturally to me, as it did you. You weren’t born learning how to make it, were you?’

‘No,’ Pitch said, turning towards him. ‘Well, it was predicted I might be able to. It was rare, but sometimes a child would be born with golden eyes, and it was a great sign towards learning how to make it. But there was still the training. The Initiation.’

‘What was it like?’ Gwyn said. ‘Where you come from?’

Jack carefully sipped at more of the vodka as he watched Pitch begin to weave one of the stories of Lune. Jack had heard many now. Was starting to get a sense of just how complicated and rich and strange Pitch’s life had been, before he’d come to Earth as the Nightmare King. He loved hearing

tales about it.

After a while, his chest started to feel warm, his eyes began to hood. The vodka was potent, and he didn't realise that it was the culprit until he realised he was sipping nothing at all. Maybe he was a little tipsy. He put the tumbler down and sprawled across the sofa on his stomach, staff leaning against him and one of his arms draping down to the floor, making frost patterns on the tiles.

It was like listening to grown-ups talking, which had always been pretty boring. But this wasn't so bad. Pitch was a good storyteller. Gwyn asked surprisingly astute questions. And it led to more storytelling. Jack felt like he was being soothed to sleep – because Pitch did that sometimes. When Jack was too scared to sleep, or too upset because a bunch of children didn't see him when he thought they would, Pitch would do this.

He was dozing when he blinked himself awake at Pitch's laughter, rubbing clumsily at his eyes. He lifted up onto his elbows and saw Gwyn looking over at him, a surprisingly tender smile on his face.

'Sorry,' Jack said.

'I should be apologising,' Gwyn said. 'I didn't mean to exclude you. I don't often hear of lands foreign to me, these days. I...get carried away.'

'You're like the King of a whole half a world or something,' Jack said, yawning. 'Pretty sure you don't have to be sorry.'

'Nevertheless,' Gwyn said.

'What time is it?' Jack said, looking towards the big bay window leading out into an almost complete darkness. There was no light pollution here, he could see so many stars when he went outside and floated through the sky. Mora would be returning closer to dawn. She often went out on her own, and Jack had no idea what her adventures were like, only that she always seemed in high spirits when she returned.

'Nearly midnight,' Pitch said. 'The Witching Hour approaches.'

'Yes,' Gwyn said. 'Did you know, three in the morning belongs to the Unseelie? They call it the Devil's Hour here.'

'Three fifteen in some places,' Jack said, grinning.

'It's not three fifteen in the morning,' Gwyn said, affronted.

'Yeah, but with no fae here to like set them straight, they do what they like with all that stuff. You should see what they did to the tale of Rapunzel. Pitch made me watch it at the movies.'

'I did not *make* you,' Pitch said, staring at him. 'Besides, you enjoyed it. And you *wept*.'

'It must be some retelling, if it is making people weep,' Gwyn said. 'But that is what humans do. They did it even before the walls were closed between our world and theirs. Even when they could cross over, they still came back and remade everything. I always thought it reflected the shortness of their lifespans. Swiftly remaking stories for cultures that are swiftly remade under the weight of all that death.'

'That's so cheerful,' Jack said quietly. 'You're always so cheerful.'

'I'm quite sure that's not one of my titles,' Gwyn said. 'I'd know. I'd have to correct them.'

'*Oh* my god, did you just make a joke?' Jack said, perking up. 'Really? I'm such a good influence on you.'

'That's not *your* influence,' Gwyn said indignantly. 'I do see and interact with other people aside from yourself, I hope you realise. Over the past some three thousand years.'

'Jesus, you're so old,' Jack said.

Pitch quietly cleared his throat and Jack grinned. 'I mean, you're *both* so old compared to me. Was that better?' Jack said to Pitch, smiling sweetly. 'Besides, it's not about how old you are really, it's how old you are on the inside.'

'And how old am I?' Gwyn said, glaring at Jack. 'On the *inside*?'

'I dunno, like – how old is Mount Everest?'

'Jack,' Pitch said, vaguely cautionary. Though there was a light in his eyes as there so often was when Jack started teasing people. For all that Pitch had a sense of what was 'appropriate' – which Jack thought was wildly skewed towards wanting to make out in dark corners way too often – Pitch enjoyed mischief as much as Jack did.

'Or like, the sea?' Jack said. 'How old's that?'

'Rather old,' Gwyn said flatly.

'So maybe a *bit* older than the sea, then.'

Gwyn was actually scowling at him. Then, he placed both hands on his armchair and stood up swiftly, turning to Pitch.

'I didn't mean to take up so much of your time,' Gwyn said. 'But I thank you truly for the invitation, *gramercie*.'

'Hey, wait, no,' Jack exclaimed. 'You don't have to go!'

'You truly don't,' Pitch said, grasping Gwyn's extended hand and holding it, instead of shaking it. Jack wondered how Pitch knew to do that. How he knew that fae didn't shake hands so much as just grasped another's hand for a period of time. 'He teases, but he means nothing by it.'

'Truthfully, I didn't want to overstay my welcome,' Gwyn said. 'I don't. I don't receive invitations like this often, except from those who wish political favour. I don't wish to- to do anything that would prevent this from happening again. Unless this is a one-off, which I will understand, of course.'

'Never that,' Pitch said. 'Perhaps we could arrange a time to spar?'

Gwyn nodded, squeezed Pitch's hand hard enough that Pitch didn't quite wince, but Jack could see that it wasn't comfortable by the tightening of his eyes.

After that, Gwyn left swiftly, offering a polite nod to Jack but not crossing the lounge to grasp his hand. Jack didn't think it was rudeness, he was pretty sure Gwyn went from feeling a regular amount of uncomfortable to...Jack didn't even know. He had no idea how that guy's brain worked.

They both saw Gwyn off. When Pitch closed the door after the King turned into a ball of light and



vanished, Jack shrugged.

‘I thought it went well,’ Jack said.

‘We’re not fighting a war,’ Pitch said. ‘I’m not being manipulated into something as we speak.’

‘So much for that jinx thing,’ Jack said, pointing at him with his staff. ‘You don’t know anything.’

‘I know you still *think* about him,’ Pitch said, grinning slowly.

‘Oh nope, no, we’re not playing that game tonight. Not tonight.’

Jack zoomed back into the lounge, and then bit down on a yelp when Pitch didn’t follow by walking, but *teleported* through the darkness to step out of the shadows on the other side of the room.

‘Come on,’ Jack said. ‘Did you do this on purpose? Is this like – are you – does our sex life need spicing up or something?’

Pitch made a derisory sound but kept walking towards Jack like he wanted to pounce. Jack pointed his staff out again, a mock threat, but he couldn’t help himself from laughing.

‘Was this your game plan?’ Jack said.

It was possible, wasn’t it? But Jack was the one who had brought it up. *Still...*

‘I only have one ‘game plan’ for the rest of this evening,’ Pitch said, practically leaping across the rest of the space and grabbing Jack by the base of his hoodie, pinning him to the couch. Jack stared up at him, biting his lower lip, squirming in no real attempt to get away – he just wanted to feel Pitch’s hands tighten on his skin.

‘Yeah?’ Jack said. ‘What kind of game plan?’

‘Let me show you,’ Pitch said, with a wicked smile.

\*

Two days later – Jack having swept the snow piled up around Pitch’s house away with some movements of his staff – they now sat side by side on rocking chairs by the front door. Winter had a lot of bite to it, but Jack didn’t mind the cold, and Pitch seemed to be a furnace of heat impervious to even the deepest of winter chills.

Jack’s only real job at Pitch’s house was to enjoy himself, and to keep the snow away when it started to pile up.

Pitch didn’t rock in his chair, and Jack was perched on his, legs bent under himself, staff touching the veranda and staring out into the world feeling a bit like a hawk must feel. He’d gotten to know all the trees around this home. Knew the fastest ways to get to the Beacon. Knew which winds to call to visit North.

‘I have something to ask you,’ Pitch said quietly.

‘Uh oh,’ Jack laughed, ‘if you’re not just coming out and asking me, I have to be worried, don’t I?’

‘You’ll worry anyway,’ Pitch said, looking over, lips lifting in a half-smile.

‘Come on then, spit it out.’

‘It’s about something I am fine with, and that you might not be. So, when I ask you what I’m about to ask you, I want you to keep in mind that just because *I’m* fine with it, doesn’t mean I’m pressuring you or expecting you to be.’

‘Normally you’re kinda eloquent,’ Jack said.

‘Would you ever be interested in taking matters with Gwyn from fantasy, into reality?’

Jack didn’t drop his staff – it was too much a part of him for him to do that – but it did skid across the veranda and make a squealing noise. His chair rocked as he caught it, and he flew off it, wanting to stand on solid ground.

‘Like...a threesome?’ Jack said, staring at him. ‘What?’

‘As in something with no strings attached, where you and I are still at the core of everything, and he goes back to his realm at the end of it.’

‘You- Ha, yeah, he’d *never* say yes to that.’

‘We’ll cross that bridge if we ever come to it,’ Pitch said quietly, leaning forwards. ‘I’m asking you, specifically, what *you* think about it.’

Jack’s breathing came a little faster. Pitch was onto him, could read his fears and insecurities, of course he knew that Jack had thought about it. He was the one who had seen it in the first place – that Jack had a type. Pitch was the one who had been really fine with it and not even seemed to care when he’d found out that they’d kissed; well, that Jack had kissed Gwyn, Gwyn didn’t really kiss back. And Pitch was the one who had never let it die, who had kept it alive in Jack’s mind, let the fantasy grow, take root, spiral up towards the sun like a tree.

‘Uh,’ Jack said, laughing breathlessly. ‘I dunno. What would it be like?’

‘I imagine we’d ask him, and if he said yes, I would make sure to keep all control, and we’d have a word or code or signal we could use to stop everything in a moment. We could start slow.’

‘*Start?*’ Jack exclaimed. ‘As in like, more than once? As in *start something that happens more than once?*’

‘Perhaps,’ Pitch said, splaying his hands on the armrests of the rocking chair and then reaching down to smooth a wrinkle in his robe.

‘Are you tired of me?’ Jack said, his heart hiccupping.

‘*No,*’ Pitch said, emphatically, not looking away from Jack at all, now. ‘No. Never. Jack if you say no to this, I will not be the slightest bit unhappy or dissatisfied or wanting more. I promise you. I wondered if your time around the humans would...influence you in this way. Where I come from, this is not a thing entered into lightly, but nor is it something that tends to indicate dissatisfaction or me being tired of you. You’re my life, Jack. You belong to me. But I would like for you to learn and discover new things, different things. And I think this could...potentially...be one of those things you carry with you as a good memory.’

‘You want it for me?’ Jack said, spinning his staff slowly.

‘For you,’ Pitch said. ‘I don’t need it. I don’t think either of us *needs* it. But it has occurred to me

that your breadth of sexual experience is what we'd call a *paucity*.'

'That's not actually possible with you,' Jack said. 'Pretty sure anyone you fuck turns into someone who like...I dunno, isn't...' Jack waved his hand.

He still couldn't believe that Pitch had said he had a paucity of sexual experience. After all the stuff he'd done with Pitch? *Seriously?*

'You're doing that thing where you're thinking about absolutely anything except what I've just asked you, aren't you?' Pitch said, smiling a little.

'Yep,' Jack said.

'You don't have to answer me now.'

'That's good, 'cuz I'm not gonna answer that now. I need some time to think about it. Jesus, Pitch, there's a big difference between the 'what if' game and actually y'know, *this*.'

'I know,' Pitch said calmly. 'I'd like for you to think about it. Take as much time as you need.'

'Haha,' Jack said dryly. 'I'll get back to you in like twenty years then.'

'That's fine,' Pitch said, smiling slowly. 'We'll all still be here then too.'

Jack's heart hiccupped again, and after a few minutes he beat a hasty retreat back to the Beacon, to distract himself from thinking about it further.

\*

To his great surprise, he did manage to stop thinking about it. Pitch didn't push the issue, didn't even bring it up. Jack kept waiting for him to make sly references to it, but when they didn't come, Jack was able to put it out of his mind. The whole thing was overwhelming to think about. He didn't even know what Gwyn was like in the bedroom. He didn't know what it would be like seeing Gwyn and Pitch in the same bedroom together, probably naked. He couldn't actually imagine anything but the sheer awkwardness of all of them naked together.

Jack thought maybe that situation would just make him laugh nonstop for a few hours, and since he wasn't lacking on laughter in his life, he was in no rush to deal with awkward naked laughter with the *King of the Seelie*.

Weeks drifted by, Jack creating snow days here and there. He would take days to learn the sign language of the trows, only to find that they'd changed some signs again, because their language was so often evolving. He spent time with Pitch – in his home, in his bed. He visited North, ate far too many candy canes and wondered if North would ever meet someone who he could love, or if he'd just always be alone in his Workshop, with the yeti, with the elves.

It was February when Pitch announced:

'Gwyn's coming to spar tomorrow.'

'Cool,' Jack said absently. 'Wait, you're not going to tell him, are you? About what you told me? About...that?'

'Of course not,' Pitch said, frowning at Jack in concern. 'Until you tell me one way or the other, it's off the table. I'd not broach it with him until you were certain, and told me so.'

‘Yeah,’ Jack said, ‘of course. I know you’re not like that.’

‘Come here,’ Pitch said, beckoning Jack over with finger. ‘Come here, Jack.’

So Jack went over and pressed his chest to Pitch’s, and wrapped his arms around Pitch’s neck, and kept himself up on the wind so they didn’t have to strain their backs or necks. Pitch’s hands stroked through Jack’s hair languidly. That was something that never bothered Jack at all now, he’d gone back to loving it and wanting those warm hands in his hair regularly. His own cold fingers traced over the back of Pitch’s neck, even as he ducked his head to Pitch’s shoulder and breathed in the scent of him – cinnamon and sandalwood, musk and something earthy, maybe the oil he used to polish his axe.

‘I’m still not so good with trust, huh?’

‘You’re *very* good with it,’ Pitch said, smiling against Jack’s cheek, kissing the side of his head. ‘If you’d prefer, I can cancel seeing Gwyn. It’s no matter.’

‘Don’t do that,’ Jack said. ‘He likes it, and I think he kinda likes us... I dunno, do you get the sense that he’s lonely?’

‘I do,’ Pitch said quietly.

‘Loneliness is so stupid,’ Jack said, thinking that his ability to form concise sentences seemed to vanish whenever he was in Pitch’s arms.

‘It is,’ Pitch said. He squeezed Jack tighter to him. ‘But I will still cancel, if you’d prefer.’

‘No,’ Jack said, moving back to meet Pitch’s eyes. ‘Don’t. Seriously. I’m not even really upset or anything. It’s just y’know, things have been going along the same for so long, I feel like messing with the status quo is like – tempting fate or something. But it’s not, is it?’

‘Sometimes,’ Pitch said. ‘But you must listen to your instincts.’

‘Yeah,’ Jack said, smiling. ‘Stupid instincts.’

Pitch mirrored his smile, and then leaned in and kissed him lightly on the lips.

‘Never,’ Pitch said. ‘Never stupid.’

\*

Jack crouched on a tree branch and watched Gwyn and Pitch spar from a distance, knowing that Pitch would know he was there. Gwyn probably knew it too, though he didn’t give any sign of it.

It was quite something, watching them train together. It reminded Jack of a period of time where he’d had to do that. When he’d needed to train with Gwyn, when he’d thought he was dying. He’d thought decades and decades of loneliness was rough, but he remembered that time of his life as a dark stain among all his other memories.

Even though he was so much better now, even though these days he was more likely to have nightmares about being lonely and forgotten and not believed in than anything else, it was still a mark in his life that he couldn’t forget. He wondered how Gwyn was about it. The whole mess had been hard for him too.

Jack never forgot the look on Gwyn’s face when Jack had said he didn’t want anything to do with

the fae realm. When Gwyn had given him that choice, and Jack had chosen, Gwyn had looked not heartbroken – exactly – because that couldn't be true, could it? And then he'd gone and said he'd choose the same thing, if he was given the same choice.

The King of the Seelie fae would also choose not to have anything to do with the fae realm. At the time, Jack hadn't really given it much thought, but it had played on him ever since.

Pitch and Gwyn trained with a kind of ferocity that Pitch didn't ever show Jack when they trained together. It was as though Pitch knew that Gwyn could handle it, and in turn, it was as though Gwyn knew that Pitch could handle himself too. They'd stop sometimes, and Gwyn would explain something to Pitch, or Pitch would explain something to Gwyn – Jack couldn't hear them – and then they'd start again. The sounds of metal against metal ringing out loudly in the forest.

Jack found it hot, watching them. He knew he had a type. He'd acknowledged that a while back, because Pitch was right. Any tall, imposing person with some military background who seemed a little damaged and moved like they could destroy the world? Apparently that was Jack's thing.

'Go figure,' he muttered under his breath.

It was obvious to him that he found Pitch more attractive. Jack's eyes kept following him, the ballet-like smoothness of some of his movements followed by hard, strikes that focused all that strength. And this was Pitch *rusty* and *out of practice*. It was hard to believe.

But Gwyn drew his gaze too, sometimes. Gwyn could also move like a dancer when he wanted to, though – more often – he seemed to favour the most direct, crude way of getting in a blow. Sometimes it was like Jack's vision blurred and he would see glimpses of that cold, crisp light surrounding Gwyn. It was strongest around his head and hands, but Jack could even see it around his feet, sinking down into the ground. It was so weird, and it disappeared whenever Jack blinked it away.

It reminded him of those times he'd just let himself stare at something for too long, and eventually a halo of light would appear around it. But that was just a trick of the eye, and with Gwyn, he could tell it was something different.

After a while, Jack flew up into the skies and took one of the faster winds in the direction of a small nearby village with children who readily believed in him and even made sculptures of him when the snow was malleable enough and didn't powder into nothingness.

He had a lot to think about, and staring at Pitch and Gwyn wasn't helping much.

\*

Two weeks later, Jack watched Pitch standing by the stovetop, idly stirring some soup. Pitch, it turned out, enjoyed cooking. Though he only had about nine recipes he could make, and didn't seem inclined to make anything else or learn anything new. Most of the food he made was also served piping hot – agonising to Jack's palate – so Jack generally just waited an hour, tried some, and always felt a little bemused to be tasting lukewarm chicken noodle soup again.

'What happens if it doesn't work?' Jack said. 'Y'know, with Gwyn?'

'You've been thinking about this rather a lot, haven't you?' Pitch said, looking at the soup as though it held deep, inscrutable truths.

'I just- Kinda. I mean, it's not- When I kissed him, it's not even like we *kissed*. What if he's like... terrible? He could be terrible. He has this reputation in the fae world – you know what it is right? I

mean, I dunno, you've kind of taught me high standards – *don't* get that look on your face, god knows you don't need to look more smug than you usually do.'

Pitch only smirked at the soup and kept stirring it, and Jack glared at him for a bit longer before his anxiety gnawed at him again.

'What if he's just like really commanding and bossy? Like, I've *worked* with him, Pitch. If he's like that in the bedroom – I can kinda only put up with that from you, I'm just saying.'

'Mm,' Pitch said, non-committal.

'What if he's all...I dunno, like what are you expecting me to do?'

'Whatever you like,' Pitch said.

'What if he doesn't want to do that?'

'Then we don't do that,' Pitch said. 'But, Jack, I have to ask you – what if it isn't terrible? I'll be there, and I suspect he will follow my lead. He will find himself ejected swiftly from this house otherwise. Like North, I don't particularly care that he's the King of the Seelie. He's not a King in this realm, and he's certainly not a King in this house.'

'I'm pretty sure if he wants to fuck things up, he's gonna do it,' Jack said.

'Jack,' Pitch said patiently, finally looking up, 'you are an increasingly powerful frost spirit with the ability to freeze anyone's cock off in seconds. Think about it.'

'*Whoa*,' Jack said staring at him.

'Imagining it are you?'

'I wish I wasn't! Why would you say that? Jesus. I'm not gonna do that!'

'But you *could*,' Pitch said, lifting the wooden spoon from the pot and tapping it patiently on the side until it wasn't dripping anymore. 'And that was my *point*.'

'Y'know,' Jack said, taking a deep breath, 'maybe you could talk to him, anyway. See what he says.'

'Certainly,' Pitch said, blinking in that way that meant he was hiding all the wicked thoughts he was having. Because Jack *knew* he was having them. He'd started to get a sixth sense for when Pitch wanted to be devious. Mostly he just needed to remind himself that Pitch wanted to be devious *almost always*.

'Before you do that though,' Jack said, 'can we talk about it a bit more? Just...so I know? What to expect?'

'If you give me twenty minutes I'll have soup and we can talk about this for as long as you like. Do you want some?'

'In about an hour,' Jack said, making a face. Pitch made the same face back at him, and Jack couldn't help but smile as he sat on the edge of the kitchen table, swinging his legs.

It was nice to have more than one place to call home.

\*

It was another month before they had Gwyn over again, and this time Jack felt like he was fraying away, his body fizzling into nothingness. The nervousness in him had percolated and was bubbling over. Pitch had said nothing more needed to happen tonight other than just bringing it up, and Jack kept thinking that he couldn't quite draw a full breath, and he kept icing things by accident, and Pitch had already slipped once on the tiles and would probably slip again before the night was over.

This time, Gwyn didn't bring any alcohol at all, but instead two large books bound in leather. Both didn't have titles on the spines, and the leather was unmarked. Pitch took them, saying thank you immediately, and when he brought them into the lounge and opened them gingerly, he looked up with more obvious gratitude in his eyes.

'They're atlases,' Gwyn said. 'For...this side of the realm. They're old, and the names of the countries are...not really used anymore. There's probably been some tectonic- But anyway, they're atlases. Of the seas and the land.'

'They're beautiful,' Pitch said, as Jack floated over and took a look.

They really were stunning. Jack knew good artwork when he saw it, even if it was all topography and ornate calligraphy.

'Cool,' Jack said, deciding he'd best not reach out and touch them. Not with how nervous he was.

The night passed not quite as awkwardly as before. Pitch ended up reminiscing over old country names on Earth and how he missed some of them, and that ended up with Gwyn talking about his explorations and adventuring. Jack realised he knew so little about Gwyn as an actual person. He only knew the big stuff: didn't get along with his family, hated being King, was kind of an asshole if he thought it was necessary and needed to get a clue the rest of the time.

'You must see a lot of untouched landscapes, whatever's left on this side of the realms,' Gwyn said, turning to Jack. 'Do you?'

'Yeah,' Jack said. 'Actually, yeah. And you know, they keep trying, but they're never gonna live on the highest mountains comfortably. Those places don't bother me so – I figure I've got some places to hang even when there's like zillions of people.'

'Zillions,' Gwyn said.

'*Zillions.*'

'Is that-? That's not a unit of measurement.'

'Is,' Jack said, grinning. 'You just don't hear enough kids talking to know. There's also *bazillions*, which is like – and then highschool kids do the 'metric fuckton' thing.'

'I admit,' Gwyn said, smiling a little, 'I don't listen to many children at all, on either side of the realms.'

'You're missing out,' Jack said.

'I'll take your word for it.'

Pitch laughed under his breath, and Jack's nerves jangled again, because that laugh – *that laugh* – it wasn't fair. None of this was fair.

Another ten minutes of inane conversation passed and Jack couldn't stand it anymore. Waiting for Pitch was absurd. Pitch was going to wait for the perfect moment, and that was going to be right at the point when Jack lost his mind, he was sure.

'So, Gwyn!' Jack said brightly. 'Remember how we kissed and stuff? Would you ever want to do that again? But like, the three of us?'

Pitch, to his credit, didn't even blink. But Gwyn sputtered the gin that Pitch had fetched for him, and then quickly put his glass down on a table counter that wasn't there. He looked sideways and realised he was setting it down on nothing at all, and hurriedly lowered his glass to the floor.

'Sorry,' Gwyn said, 'I apologise, but I think I misheard you.'

'You didn't,' Pitch said, getting more comfortable in his chair.

'Because it sounded an awful lot like I was just propositioned, by- Ah-'

Gwyn stood, brushing non-existent dust off his shirt and not making eye contact with either of them. Jack was starting to panic, because he knew Gwyn might not be interested, but this was a total disaster. But Pitch made a subtle signal with his fingers, indicating that Jack shouldn't move, and then Pitch stood and stepped closer to Gwyn.

Jack stared, because Pitch had used that level of focus and heat with *Jack* before, but this was the first time he'd ever seen Pitch use it on anyone else. And it was...it was making something flutter in his gut, watching the way Gwyn just went still, watching Pitch from the corner of his eye.

'Is it so odd?' Pitch said smoothly.

'Yes,' Gwyn said, clearing his throat. 'Look, I realise- I know that you're- You're both very- But I'm not in a habit of...'

'I can read your fears too, you know,' Pitch said. 'Not all of them. But enough. You don't have to be afraid.'

'I am the *King*,' Gwyn said, his voice loud enough that it was like he was trying to address fifty people at once, instead of standing in an exceptionally quiet living room, the only sound the crackling and popping of the fire in the hearth. 'I am the King of the Seelie, and I am not-'

Pitch slid a hand along Gwyn's forearm and then looked over at Jack. He made a beckoning gesture with his finger, and Jack floated up into the air, came slowly closer. It was incredible how – in the face of someone else's agitation – his own didn't vanish, exactly, but it became manageable.

He'd not expected Gwyn to be flustered, for some reason. Except that now that he was seeing it, it made perfect sense.

'We're not going to hurt you,' Pitch said. 'It's something we've talked about. We're not looking for a relationship, or anything that would tax you emotionally. But you've been curious about him, haven't you?'

'It's not a trick,' Jack said, 'or a joke or anything like that. I know I like to tease all the time, but seriously, it's not.'

Gwyn looked between them both, then looked down at the hand that Pitch still had on his forearm.



‘Did you plan this from the beginning?’ Gwyn asked.

‘Nope,’ Jack said. ‘We just wanted to kind of see how things were going. How you were.’

‘Did *you*?’ Gwyn asked, his voice harder, as he turned to Pitch.

Pitch tilted his head, and then finally, after a long pause that made Jack’s brow furrow, he shook his head.

‘No,’ Pitch said. ‘I’d thought about it, but then I think about things like that a *great* deal.’

‘He does,’ Jack said, staring at him. ‘He really does.’

Pitch only smiled in response to that.

Jack found it amazing that they were really doing this. It didn’t matter now if Gwyn said yes or no. If it never ended up *actually* happening then he’d live with it. What mattered now was that Jack had put the words out there into the world, and Pitch had concurred, and Jack didn’t feel like the sky was falling.

In fact, floating in front of Gwyn in the way that he was, seeing Pitch stand so close to him, this seemed a lot easier than he thought it would be. Because he could see now that he held power here too. This wasn’t just the ‘Gwyn and Pitch run the whole show’ parade. Here, in this moment, he remembered that he’d been the one to kiss Gwyn the first time, and he’d been the one to bring it up now, and he was the one floating closer to Gwyn and seeing the fear in his eyes and wondering what it tasted like to Pitch, wondering what it *felt* like. If it felt good.

But Jack didn’t want Gwyn to be afraid, and he pressed the fingers not holding his staff lightly to Gwyn’s shirt. Ice spread and then stopped, a tiny aborted seven-spoked wheel.

‘You’ve talked about this,’ Gwyn said, his voice strained.

‘Yeah,’ Jack said, smoothing his thumb across Gwyn’s chest and looking over at Pitch, somehow not surprised to see Pitch watching with a hungry glint in his eyes.

*He really doesn’t do jealousy. Because I really do belong to him.*

‘You can try kissing him,’ Pitch said, ‘if you like.’

Gwyn opened his mouth to respond, but Jack realised the request wasn’t for Gwyn at all. It was easy to close those inches between them and press his lips to Gwyn’s like he had the first time. Except this time they weren’t in a freezing cold cave by a dying fire, after nightmares that had ruined the both of them. This time he wasn’t doing it because Gwyn reminded him of Pitch, because something huge was missing from his heart.

This time his heart was whole and he found he still liked it. Still liked those slightly chapped, rough lips against his. Liked that sharp inhale of breath. Even liked the way Gwyn’s hand came up and rested on Jack’s flank. Warmth radiated from Gwyn. Not as much as Pitch exuded, but enough that it was nice to feel Gwyn’s hand there, at his side.

When Jack leaned back, Gwyn leaned forwards, and then the hand at his flank yanked and Gwyn initiated the next touch between them. But his kiss wasn’t rough – not like his touch. It was sweet, lips almost pressed together, finding the shape of Jack’s mouth, so gentle that Jack felt himself yielding.

And when Pitch came closer to the both of them and pressed his nose to Jack's cheek, nuzzling softly, Jack's mouth parted on a gasp.

'See?' Pitch said against Jack's skin. 'What does he taste like, Jack?'

Jack shuddered, clutched Gwyn's shirt, not caring about the frost that spun out from his fingertips now. He leaned in, licked across Gwyn's lower lip, then licked again, feeling the way Gwyn's mouth parted, how shallow his breathing was. How shallow the *King's* breathing was.

His tongue slipped into heat, and it was so very different from Pitch, yet new and fascinating.

'Lightning,' Jack said, 'if it had a taste.'

Gwyn's eyes fluttered shut, but Jack's eyes stayed open as he leaned back, taking in all the details. Those thick pale lashes. The way Gwyn's mouth was still open and expectant. His grip was too hard at Jack's side, it ached, but aside from that, he'd not been pushy or forceful at all. Still, the knowledge that he *could* be...knowing that Pitch would make sure Jack was never hurt, there to watch over him...

He looked at Pitch and blinked when – instead of talking – Pitch gripped the back of Jack's head and kissed him, tongue slowly curling over Jack's, tasting whatever Jack had tasted.

After that, Jack felt dazed, thinking that this might be one of those 'bitten off more than he could chew' situations. When he met Gwyn's eyes – open again – he realised that Gwyn seemed to feel the same way.

Pitch looked between them, didn't seem bothered or nervous at all.

'Uh,' Jack said, 'if you need time to think about it though...'

'There's ground rules,' Pitch added seriously, 'if you agree to this.'

'Okay,' Gwyn said, looking between them both. 'Is this a...do you have a particular time in mind?'

'Now's good,' Jack said. 'I mean, for me.'

'I suppose I'd better hear these ground rules,' Gwyn said, looking down to where Jack's hand was fisted into his shirt. 'But I'm not sure what you're expecting. I'm not- I am gifted at war. You understand?'

'Hey,' Jack said, beaming, 'you've got nothing to worry about, Pitch is a really good teacher.'

Gwyn stared at him, and then looked over at Pitch and raised his eyebrows. But instead of challenge, Jack only saw someone who was bewildered. But even now, that grip on his side was firm. This could be good, Jack realised. It could be good to have this and then go back to it being just the two of them afterwards. Pitch had given him so many options, so many ways out that it didn't feel threatening now. Sure, he'd panic again later – he was sure – but for now...

*What if it's good? What if it's better than good?*

Jack's smile was slow, but sincere.

'So, do we have the ground rules talk here? Or like, in the bedroom?'

'Here,' Pitch said, hand drifting up and cupping the back of Jack's neck. 'So we can all concentrate.'

‘Good luck with that,’ Jack said, pushing upwards to kiss Gwyn again, tasting lightning and something savoury-sweet. Gwyn opened his mouth again, didn’t kiss roughly at all, but instead seemed to wait for Jack to take charge. Jack found the invitation irresistible, because what he’d imagined – oh – he’d imagined the both of them taking control and Jack disappearing under the force of it.

But this? This could be good. Pitch consuming him, and maybe Jack would get a chance to consume someone else. The idea of it being the awkward King of the Seelie fae made his heart feel like it was skipping beats.

‘What if it doesn’t work?’ Gwyn said against Jack’s mouth, his voice lower than before, quieter.

‘We got all the bases covered,’ Jack whispered. ‘But I s’pose we’d better have that conversation, right?’

Jack withdrew reluctantly, and Gwyn was slow to let go of his hoodie, his hand still slightly outreached when Jack moved out of range.

This time, when they sat down, Jack stayed nearby. He didn’t retreat back to the sofa again. He perched on the armrest of Pitch’s armchair, feeling more comfortable than he thought he would. Pitch leaned close, and Gwyn seemed unsettled, but interested.

*It’s happening*, Jack thought. *Holy shit it’s happening*.

As his heartrate began to climb again, he felt fingers on his back, carefully rubbing a heated, soothing circle into his skin. That was all it took for Jack to remember that he was safe, that he was in good hands, that Gwyn was too. He sighed out some of his tension and tried not to think about all the things they could do, all the ‘what if’ games he and Pitch had imagined together.

It was a losing battle.

## Chapter 2

### Chapter Notes

Added some new tags! :D Thanks everyone for reading and coming with me on this little foray back into the SALverse again, even if it is a SALverse AU, I'm choosing to believe that in another universe, this all works out very very well for all three of them. God I'd missed the voices of SAL Jack and SAL Pitch, it was like coming home. :D Comments are love <3 \*bounces quietly\*

The conversation had gone on longer than Jack expected, and Pitch had been surprisingly clear. Everything he'd laid out patiently for Jack before, he did the same with the King, as if they both shared the same limited experience with these sorts of things. Jack just figured Gwyn pretended to sit patiently through it because he was polite, because who got through three thousand years of life without doing something like this?

His nerves flared again up in their bedroom. Pitch had asked Jack if he'd wanted to use another bedroom, not alter this space with anything but their own presences, but Jack realised he didn't really care. This room – the whole house – had been sullied by the Nightmare King and his minions years ago. They'd recovered from that. Jack hardly thought anything else could touch it. They knew how to make a space sacred, they'd done it before.

Gwyn – despite his own awkwardness – had no problems stripping off his clothing. Where Jack expected hesitation, none came, and it was clear that Gwyn's insecurity had nothing to do with his physical appearance. For he stood proudly naked – though not yet hard – to one side of the bed and looked between the two of them expectantly.

'Well then,' Pitch said. 'I suppose I shouldn't be surprised you're so well-formed.'

Gwyn's cheeks pinked a little, at that, but then he laughed. 'Thank you. It's odd to hear you say so. My form isn't so appreciated in the fae realm.'

'What?' Jack said, in the midst of carefully hanging his staff on the hook that Pitch had installed specifically for it. 'It's not?'

'No,' Gwyn said, looking between them both. 'You didn't know?'

Pitch folded his robe carefully, placing it over the armchair they'd thieved from North's Workshop. Jack stared between Pitch and Gwyn. They made it seem easy. They were making small talk now. Like it was *easy*. He rolled his eyes to himself and realised he didn't have to worry about kicking off shoes, or really fussing much at all. He had a hoodie, and he had pants. He didn't even bother with a shirt or underwear. But...he was the most scarred out of all of them, and his fingers stroked the hem of his hoodie uncertainly.

'How come you've got no scars?' Jack said. 'Like, being alive so long...is it just a fae thing?'

'A status thing,' Gwyn said, sitting on the edge of the bed and folding his hands in his lap. 'If you're Court or higher, the only way you can scar is through magical means. And even then – only rarely.'

'Is that why you don't have many scars?' Jack said, looking at Pitch curiously.

'I'm not *fae*,' Pitch said, through his black undershirt. 'How should I know?'

But when Pitch removed his shirt properly, he must have caught some expression on Jack's face, for his own eyes softened. He tilted his head. 'Come here, Jack.'

So Jack went, crossing the room and looking at Gwyn as warily as Gwyn looked at the both of them. Maybe Gwyn was waiting for a written contract. He seemed like the kind of guy who would want a contract.

When he reached Pitch, he was surprised at the hands that turned him to face Gwyn, at the arms that wrapped around him strongly as Pitch bent down to place his chin on Jack's head.

'Shy?' Pitch murmured.

'Maybe,' Jack said. 'You're both like...hot. I mean- Y'know.'

'I think you underestimate your own appeal,' Pitch said, his hands sliding down to the hem of Jack's hoodie and lifting it slowly, giving Jack time to make up his mind. So, with a stuttered breath, Jack lifted his arms and tried to find that place of calm he'd found before, while listening to Pitch explaining everything to Gwyn. They had a safeword. They had a non-verbal signal. They all did. But feeling the air of the room – warmer than his body – touching his skin, he still shivered. He resisted the urge to cover the scars at his side, even the ones at his neck that were visible all the time.

Warm hands wrapped around his torso again, and Gwyn watched avidly. He made no attempt to move. Jack had heard Gwyn was an aggressive lover. Now, though, he was so still.

It reminded Jack not of a prey animal, but a predator in the woods, stopping to track prey and gaze calculatingly, deciding whether it might be worth pouncing upon or not.

'You are comely,' Gwyn said, voice tempered with none of that hardness from before.

Jack exhaled silently, because that spun some of his tension away. He didn't know why it mattered. It's not like he was in a relationship with *Gwyn*. It's not like he'd lose anything at all, if Gwyn didn't find him appealing.

That wasn't quite right either. He and Gwyn had been through a lot together. He refused to believe it meant nothing to Gwyn. He'd seen how wrecked Gwyn had been in that cave before they'd seen the Glasera. He'd seen his expressions break apart from calm into pain. He'd listened to Gwyn confide in him and knew that Gwyn wouldn't say those things to others in the fae realm.

'Are you all right?' Pitch said into Jack's hair.

'Yeah,' Jack said, meeting Gwyn's eyes. 'I am.'

'And you?' Pitch said to Gwyn.

'So far,' Gwyn said, as though he was prepared to not be later on.

Jack didn't frown, but he pulled away from Pitch's grip and walked towards the bed. This had been Pitch's idea, but wanting to see Gwyn again in the first place had been Jack's. For all he teased the guy, he didn't want this to be something they'd regret. Even if it stopped halfway through. Even if it became nothing at all. That meant acknowledging that he liked Gwyn, on some level. And it was

a strange thing to realise that he *did* like him. After all, he'd kept that sending crystal in his pocket all this time, hadn't he?

On a deeper instinct, Jack reached into his pocket and drew it out, watching as Gwyn's eyes widened to see it.

'I kept it,' Jack said, smiling ruefully. 'But the magic wore off a while ago.'

'It did,' Gwyn said, looking at him as though he couldn't quite believe Jack had kept it.

'I know you live for a really long time,' Jack said, 'and are like way older than me, but I dunno, that whole period of my life – you kind of hung in there with me and it mattered. I know it doesn't mean much for you, because you must-'

'I didn't say that,' Gwyn said, his eyebrows coming together. 'Did I ever say that?'

'No, but- I just thought-'

'I wouldn't say that,' Gwyn said, looking down at the crystal. Then his eyes shifted, found the pale scars at Jack's flank, his mouth tightening in a way that didn't seem disgusted. Still, Jack had to resist the urge to cover them again, because he was the only one who wore scars from that time. 'Are you sure you want to do this?'

'What?' Jack said.

'Are you certain?' Gwyn said. 'Sometimes the idea of a thing is far better than the thing itself.'

Jack's breath caught in his chest. He didn't have a word for whatever ache bloomed then, and he looked around to see Pitch sliding on the bed and felt grateful, because what the hell was Jack meant to say to that? It was obvious Gwyn was referring to himself.

Pitch was wholly naked, wholly unbothered, and he moved close to the both of them, stealing Gwyn's concentration as Jack stuffed the crystal back into his pocket.

'I'm sure,' Jack said. 'I've had time to think about it. You haven't though.'

'I confess I'm curious,' Gwyn said, meeting Pitch's eyes and smiling a little. And then he opened his mouth to say something else, only to stiffen when Pitch slid a long-fingered hand into his curly hair and held him still, placed his lips firmly over Gwyn's mouth, silencing whatever else he'd been about to say.

Jack watched, waited with bated breath for jealousy to roar to life in his chest, waited to feel some kind of hatred or pain to watch them together like this. That was what he was supposed to feel, wasn't it? All the negotiation in the world couldn't stop sheer *instinct*.

Instead, his gut tightened with a kindling warmth, his fingers curled by his sides. Because he knew what it was like. He knew what Gwyn was tasting – that richness, those spices. He knew from the way Pitch's mouth was open that he would be sliding his tongue inside possessively, but slowly. That he would overwhelm with sensuality instead of force. And from the way Gwyn's eyes had closed, from the humming sound that came from between their lips, Jack knew that Gwyn *liked* it.

It stole the breath from his chest. He moved closer, touched fingers to Pitch's side and smoothed up his chest in the way he knew that Pitch liked. Let a tiny amount of frost flow across Pitch's chest, across one dark nipple before letting it stretch towards the other.

Pitch laughed low into Gwyn's mouth, and Jack wondered if Gwyn would feel Pitch smiling then, if Pitch would become more forceful.

Pitch pressed fingers between his lips and Gwyn's, breaking the kiss and keeping Gwyn quiet at the same time. Gwyn opened his eyes and looked between them both, and where Pitch looked pleased, Gwyn looked shocked.

Then, Pitch pressed his lips to Gwyn's ear and whispered loud enough for Jack to hear:

'I think you should kiss him too, don't you?'

Gwyn swallowed at the same time Jack did, and then Gwyn was leaning forwards and Jack was pushing up into a better kneeling position, holding onto Pitch's side. When their lips met, Jack could taste Pitch there, just faintly. Gwyn wasn't kissing him aggressively, but slowly finding the shape of Jack's mouth. A hand that Jack instantly knew wasn't Pitch's rested gently underneath his chin, keeping his head up, and then a thumb brushed along his jaw.

Jack's heart quickened, and then Pitch's hand curled at his lower back, steadying him. At least it felt like steadying until his fingers dipped below the waistband of Jack's pants and pointed meaningfully downwards.

Jack's eyes widened when he felt teeth scrape carefully against his bottom lip. Then scrape carefully again, even slower this time, as though testing his response. Jack moaned softly, then his breath hitched when that scraping became a bite. A pattern of teeth he wasn't familiar with. Canines not as sharp as Pitch's, teeth neater and still able to cause that flash of pain. A tongue that soothed over that sharpness with not as much finesse as Pitch did, but it was still good. Still good.

When they looked at each other, Jack thought that the wonder in Gwyn's eyes was reflected in his own.

'Your mouth is cold,' Gwyn said, and Pitch hummed an agreement from where he was pressed so close to Gwyn's body, even as his hand was still wrapped around Jack's side.

'Yeah,' Jack said, 'do you mind?'

'No,' Gwyn said, his mouth working as though he was tasting the inside of it.

Jack looked at Gwyn's shoulders then, his neck, the muscles of his torso. His hand reached out and the backs of his knuckles touched Gwyn's forearm. He half-expected some kind of static shock, because even now he could see glimpses of that light. But there was no zap, nothing more than skin that was cooler now that it was exposed to the air of the room.

'You don't have any body hair,' Jack said suddenly, palming Gwyn's forearm in shock. 'Do you shave?'

'I- No,' Gwyn said. 'Is that a problem?'

'Of course not,' Jack said, looking up and smiling at the question. But at the look in Gwyn's eyes, he frowned. 'Is it in the fae realm?'

'No,' Gwyn said, looking at the place where Jack was touching his forearm. 'But then I am not in these situations often to know if it would be.'

'You don't do this much, do you?' Jack said, his hand fitting into Gwyn's hand, his thumb tracing the grooved lines there, callouses from holding a sword or maybe a shield. Jack had never seen him

use a shield before. Maybe he didn't need one.

'I don't do this at all,' Gwyn said, fingers curling around Jack's hand.

'You don't mind this? It's not too cold?' Jack said. He was keeping his frost under control, though it was harder than usual. He wondered what Gwyn meant. Gwyn didn't do threesomes at all? He didn't sleep with strangers at all? Wait, that wasn't right. He didn't have sex with people in the human realm at all?

'No,' Gwyn said, lips lifting in a half-smile. 'You're not too cold.'

'I already knew Jack was sweet,' Pitch said, smiling warmly at Jack before turning to Gwyn, 'but I didn't know you were.'

Gwyn's eyes narrowed, like he couldn't tell if he was being insulted or not.

'Gwyn,' Pitch said, his voice stronger than before, the kind of voice he'd use on Jack if he was in one of his controlling moods. Just hearing the voice made Jack's cock twitch. 'What do you want to do to him? What do you think he'll let you do?'

Waiting for an answer meant staying in his kneeling position while Gwyn looked him up and down with searching eyes. Jack licked at his lips, saw that intent expression on Pitch's face, which had only ever promised good things in the past.

'Is there any reason,' Gwyn said slowly, 'that you have to keep your pants on?'

Jack blinked at him, and then pressed his lips together when Pitch's fingers dipped lower beneath his waistband.

'Um,' Jack said. 'I dunno. You're not fucking me.'

'That's not why I was asking,' Gwyn said, and then he reached forwards, twisting to look at Pitch as though checking it was okay, sliding his warm palm up the inside of Jack's thigh and stopping before touching Jack's filling cock. 'This is why. If that's okay. It's been a while, and I'm out of practice.'

'Wait,' Jack said, mind boggling when he realised what Gwyn was asking. Because there was something about the look on his face that didn't promise just a handjob, and the idea of Gwyn's mouth anywhere near his cock was like being hit by a bolt of lightning. He went from a little hard, to fully hard so fast it actually hurt his gut. 'Shit.'

'Is that a no?' Gwyn said.

'That's not a no,' Pitch purred. 'I think he expected the King of the Seelie to be a bit more domineering.'

'I...*can* be,' Gwyn said, frowning. 'But I'm not sure you'd want that.'

'Not yet, anyway,' Pitch said, smiling toothily.

'*Pitch*,' Jack said, staring at him, 'can you be less of a perv? Seriously?'

'How do you feel about rope?' Pitch said to Gwyn, as Gwyn moved his other hand to Jack's knee. Gwyn stiffened, and then turned to look over his shoulder again.

'You realise that no rope can hold me,' Gwyn said.



‘How do you feel about the symbolic gesture of rope that you *cooperate* with, while pretending that you’re nicely bound?’

‘What- What would you do?’

That tone of voice Jack was familiar with. That was the way he sounded when Pitch suggested things sometimes. Anticipatory and a little scared all at the same time. And he wondered if that meant Pitch could taste Gwyn’s fear, and he realised he needed to know what it was like afterwards. It had taken him a long time to realise that Pitch felt fear in colour and texture and the senses, and hearing Pitch describe the fears of others was amazing. A way of learning someone in ways that were so new to him.

‘I’d like to bind your arms behind your back,’ Pitch said, trailing fingers down Gwyn’s shoulder, his upper arm. Jack could *see* the gooseflesh that followed Pitch’s touch. Could feel the way Gwyn’s fingers tightened reflexively in Jack’s skin. ‘That way I can see all the better what you can do with your *mouth*.’

‘It’s occurred to me that you don’t treat me very much like a King should be treated,’ Gwyn said, his voice rougher than before.

‘Do you want me to?’ Pitch said.

A long pause, Jack could feel dampness under Gwyn’s palm where it was pressed flat to his pants. He was sweating.

‘No,’ Gwyn said finally. ‘Though I’d...prefer your confidence in the matter.’

‘And you have it,’ Pitch said, smiling and sliding off the bed, walking to the chest of drawers that contained the very tip of the iceberg that was his toys and ropes. ‘I am not the kind to bleat endlessly about bedroom games with others.’

‘He’s not,’ Jack said.

‘Jack,’ Pitch said smoothly. ‘Take your pants off for me, pretty please?’

‘With a cherry on top?’ Jack said under his breath, but he shuffled away from Gwyn’s hands and shucked his pants quickly, forgetting that he was supposed to feel embarrassed. Gwyn had already seen his scars, and Pitch loved him no matter what, and there was a taut pleasure in his cock that would only feel better if he could get Gwyn’s mouth on it. Because there was no way that was going to happen without Jack being able to think: *the King sucked me off* for the rest of his life. That was going to be joyful, even if he couldn’t just tell the whole world about it.

Gwyn’s attention seemed torn between Pitch pulling out lengths of a pale blue rope that Jack was more than familiar with, and looking at Jack with an expression that Jack wasn’t used to seeing. He was used to seeing Gwyn cold, manipulative, aloof. But this was...

It was weird. In his first long conversation about all of this with Pitch, Jack had scoffed when Pitch said he suspected that Gwyn had a need to please, and that he could subsume his rougher whims if he was guided correctly. It was a weird thing for someone to say about *Gwyn*. That was the dude who was constantly saying he was the King if anyone so much as disagreed with him.

But Jack could see it now. Felt a kind of kinship with it. Wondered if that was partly why Gwyn didn’t like being the King. Because Jack hated that kind of stuff too.

*Oh come on, it’s not like we’re the same. Stop doing that.*

When Pitch stood behind Gwyn and positioned his arms – a position Jack knew all too well, one where Gwyn would be clasping one forearm with his other hand, shoulders pulled back enough that they would start to ache after a while – Jack hungrily watched the expressions on Gwyn’s face. He couldn’t read them all. But he could tell there was apprehension and wariness. Jack realised that he wasn’t the only one who could be pushed, it made him feel oddly protective.

He looked up, watching the seriousness on Pitch’s face as he worked through one of his lengths of rope, creating a safe but tight binding, one that would be very pretty to look at – not that Jack had ever seen that particular pattern in anything other than a mirror.

Pitch’s eyes met his like he knew. He smiled in reassurance, and Jack wanted to smile back, but he felt caught on a tightrope. It was like a conspiracy: that he and Pitch knew everything about this, and Gwyn knew nothing at all except what he was told, and he was still willing to try.

‘Does that feel okay?’ Pitch said, tugging on the rope as though checking it.

Gwyn nodded, and then seemed to flex in the rope. For all that he said it couldn’t hold him, it looked like he’d have to exert himself to break it, that it wouldn’t just disintegrate because he willed it. After a few seconds he nodded again.

‘This doesn’t leave this room,’ Gwyn said again.

‘I swear,’ Pitch said, ‘on all that I hold dear, that it will not. Does it bother you so much?’

‘It’s unseemly,’ Gwyn said, ‘for a King.’

‘Yeah,’ Jack said, smiling at him. ‘I’m pretty sure it’s not really seemly for like...a frost spirit that adores kids and stuff. But hey, private life versus public, right? If I’m making a snow day, they don’t need to know that I like the marks rope leaves on my body afterwards.’

Gwyn swallowed and stared at Jack’s body like he was imagining it, like he *liked* it.

‘This is going to be simple,’ Pitch said, shifting behind Gwyn and moving his hands. One curled over Gwyn’s shoulder, and then the other pulled on the ropes around his forearms – Jack could hear them creaking. ‘Since you can’t brace yourself properly, I’ll do that for you. Whenever you’ve had enough, say so. You can say whatever you wish to say. We’ll listen.’

Jack’s smile stayed on his face at those words. Because that was what Pitch had taught him. An endless patience, an endless willingness to listen, a domination which was sometimes threatening, sometimes even scary, but always filled with care and love. Through that attitude, Jack had gone from thinking he’d have flashbacks the rest of his life, to being able to somehow let go of them and walk beyond them.

Gwyn nodded again, and then Jack was fisting the quilt up in his hands as Gwyn leaned forwards – Pitch shifting to allow him – and pressed his forehead against Jack’s leg. Jack could feel warm breath on his skin, the bridge of a nose, and then lips opening and wetness. Gwyn mouthing his way up Jack’s thigh, and Jack had to spread his legs a little then. He lifted his hand and placed it carefully in Gwyn’s hair, and thought this was the first time he’d ever felt it, and that after so long being used to touching Pitch’s wiry, coarse hair, this was so soft. He fluffed it absently, felt a breath of laughter against his leg.

Jack looked up, breathless, and Pitch looked mischievous. He winked at Jack. That was the moment when Gwyn’s breath gusted warm over Jack’s cock, and Jack looked down, his fingers tightening in Gwyn’s hair.

Gwyn went still, waiting, and Jack's heart was thumping so hard he was sure it was going to beat right out of his chest. Gwyn hissed when frost crystals spread over his scalp, and Jack tried to pet them away gently and hurriedly.

'Sorry,' Jack said.

'Don't be,' Gwyn said, his voice so close that Jack could feel it vibrating over his cock.

'Kinda can't believe this is happening right now.'

He thought Gwyn would agree, but instead Jack felt the flat of a tongue lick his cock until it met the base, lapping at sensitive skin. Jack closed his eyes, his head tilted back, he reminded himself to keep his hands light, to keep his frost away. Pitch might have had no problems with it, but freezing anyone doing this for him was probably not that polite.

When Gwyn sucked gently, then with increasing force, at the head his cock – unable to use his hands to brace himself, one shoulder digging into Jack's leg – Jack made a soft, wanting noise. It was good, it was different, it was familiar and unfamiliar all at once. His mouth wasn't as warm as Pitch's, his tongue was broader, there was a roughness there in some of the movements that called pleasure too sharply. Hard sucks as Gwyn took more of him into his mouth that made Jack gasp.

He didn't have much presence of mind to be surprised when Gwyn kept pushing down, couldn't do much more than groan weakly when he felt the head of his cock hit the back of Gwyn's throat, and then cried out when lips met his pelvis.

'Oh god,' Jack breathed, 'how is this happening again?'

Gwyn hummed around him, and then began to slowly bob his head. The rough war-maker was nowhere to be seen here. Jack managed to open his eyes and stare at Pitch, thinking that this was not what he expected.

'You're so good,' Jack murmured to Gwyn, even as he couldn't tear his eyes away from Pitch. And Gwyn huffed a breath out in response to that, and Jack thought it was a laugh at first, and then belatedly realised it wasn't. And, testing, said: 'Really, *really* good, oh my god.'

Gwyn doubled his efforts after that, and Jack bit down a joyful laugh because he had a feeling it wouldn't be appreciated, but it *was* good. Pitch looked so pleased. Jack had thought maybe Pitch would feel like...maybe just a *bit* of jealousy. That Pitch would do this and then there would be moments where he'd narrow his eyes, but there was none of that, and that felt good too.

'Gwyn,' Pitch said, smoothing his hand over a section of rope and skin at Gwyn's back. 'Do you think you can get our frost spirit to come?'

'Yeah,' Jack said fervently, 'I'm pretty sure he can.'

Gwyn lifted off long enough to say, 'I think I can too.'

'Ah, wonderful,' Pitch said. And Gwyn lowered himself back down, Jack moaning again and watching the place where Pitch grasped Gwyn's forearms and kept him anchored. Gwyn could strain forward without falling onto his face, and his hands shifted and twitched like he wanted to touch, his shoulders flexed, but he stayed focused, drawing up that tight knot in Jack's spine, using tongue and lips and the roof of his mouth to draw Jack closer and closer to that place where he could just let go.

Jack kept petting Gwyn's hair with one hand, and with the other he clasped the quilt again so he

could let his frost go. His thoughts were disappearing now, all the surprise and fascination and interest dissolving into pleasure and tension and the sound of his own voice echoing in his ears. He murmured things like 'that's nice' and 'good' and 'oh god' and felt his hips bucking, tight twitches because Jack didn't want to be rough, but it was so hard to control himself.

Then, Gwyn pushed all the way down, mouth at the sensitive skin of Jack's pelvis, sucking in hard, rhythmic pulses that hurt, that felt good, that made him feel like Gwyn was just going to suck the life right out of him.

Jack whimpered once, his back arching and his hand tightening in Gwyn's hair, pulling as he was shoved over that precipice. A hanging moment before he started to come, where he was yanked through pleasure, his whole focus narrowing around his cock, the tightening in his balls, the sudden feeling of tiny frost crystals floating in the back of his mouth.

Then he was coming hard, wave after wave, and Gwyn stayed down without being held in place. Pitch leaned forwards while keeping Gwyn secure and pressed his mouth to Jack's collarbones, licked across his skin, nipped his way to Jack's jaw and sighed warmly against his face.

'Okay,' Jack was saying, 'okay, okay, shit, okay. Hang on. Oh my god.'

'Stay there for just another moment, Gwyn,' Pitch said softly, when Gwyn shifted like he wanted to rise. And then Pitch's lips caught Jack's, soft movements becoming knowing, then possessive. Jack yielded to that claiming, moaned sweet sounds into Pitch's mouth.

Pitch moved back, lifted Gwyn, who lapped tenderly at the head of Jack's cock. And Jack caught a dazed expression on his face, and Gwyn's own cock was hard, and Jack started to reach forwards and then bit the inside of his lip when Pitch changed tack and pressed his mouth firmly to Gwyn's. From the muffled sound Gwyn made, Pitch was licking the inside of his mouth, tasting Jack. The kiss was rougher than what he'd shared with Jack, but it gentled when Gwyn did nothing more than stay still for it.

'Do you know,' Gwyn said against Pitch's mouth, 'it's not often I find myself in unexpected situations, anymore. But with you two, it seems to happen a great deal.'

'You're welcome,' Pitch said, reaching up and drawing his thumb across Gwyn's pale eyebrow, then stroking at the lines on Gwyn's forehead.

His hand dropped easily to Gwyn's cock, fingers wrapping around it even as Gwyn jerked and his shoulders shifted harder in the ropes.

'Easy,' Pitch murmured. 'Easy.'

Jack could hear Gwyn breathing through his nose. Saw the way he was trying to keep himself together. His lips shone a little in the lamplight of the room, Jack didn't know if it was just Pitch's saliva, or if it was also from Gwyn having gone down on him.

Jack knew he'd said, 'you're not fucking me,' but now there was a thrill about it. Gwyn's cock was wider than Pitch's, but Jack loved that feeling of being full, overwhelmed by something heat-filled and intense. It drove him outside of himself, as though his consciousness lived not just in his body, but spiralled out and blanketed the world. As though he wasn't just one of many forces behind winter, but the entirety of it.

He could trust now that Pitch really wouldn't mind. Which meant it was down to whether he minded. Or Gwyn minded.

'Pitch,' Jack said, staring at that point where Pitch was still just holding Gwyn's cock. Not even moving. It was possessive. It was almost like a dare. But Gwyn wasn't moving, wasn't pushing back, wasn't trying to gain more for himself.

Jack remembered the first time Pitch had done that to him. Just held him like that. And Jack had gone mad with it. He'd tried to jerk himself off in Pitch's hand. He'd tried to get hands on his own cock. It had taken him a while to realise that Pitch just wanted him to accept it, an ownership that went beyond driving him towards orgasm, about trusting who would give him pleasure in that moment.

To see Gwyn just accepting it, not even fighting back...had Gwyn been like this before?

'So,' Jack said, placing his hand over Pitch's, an impish glee flooding him at the sharp hiss Gwyn made at the chill of it, 'I know I said like, you weren't fucking me...'

'I'll freeze to death,' Gwyn mumbled.

'He warms up,' Pitch said, 'with friction.'

'Jesus,' Jack said, ducking his head. 'I mean, I know we're like crossing new ground and stuff but Pitch, come on. You're like that dirty old man that everyone's afraid of.'

'Mm,' Pitch said, like it was a compliment.

'*Pitch*,' Jack said.

'And he likes heat,' Pitch said, not looking away from Jack. 'Don't you?'

Jack opened his mouth to protest, but it wasn't like it was a secret, and he was already starting to feel his body temperature shift from being around them both. Even his cock was warmer, because of Gwyn's mouth.

'Besides,' Pitch said, jacking Gwyn once, slowly, and grinning when Gwyn's head tipped back. 'It's no colder than what you tasted. How *did* he taste? You were wonderful, swallowing all of him down without even needing to be told.'

Gwyn's cheeks – already flushed – took on a darker shade and he looked down at the hands between his legs and didn't say anything. Jack bit at his top lip and then drew his hand away from Gwyn's cock and licked his palm, bringing it back and skating that cool slickness over the glans at the head of Gwyn's cock. Gwyn opened his mouth, something like a cry being stopped just a moment too late. Jack felt like he wasn't any closer to saying that he didn't want this now that he'd suggested it.

'I won't last long,' Gwyn said then, and made a sound of frustration when Pitch's hand – slowly moving – came to a stop. 'That's not what I meant.'

'Jack,' Pitch murmured, 'be a darling, you know where the lubricant is.'

Pitch's expression was warm, encouraging, and Jack crawled across the bed with limbs sated from the orgasm he'd had. He knew he wouldn't be likely to come again for a while now, and he didn't really care. He wanted all of them to be happy by the end of this, and Pitch had taught him the delectable truth of being fucked after having spent already. Sometimes being hard, straining for release – it just got in the way. Jack had sometimes thought he might be capable of being a sensual creature, but Pitch had taught him just how true that was.

'Is that from the sword?' Gwyn said suddenly, and Jack paused – stretched out on the bed and fumbling for the little jar of stuff that Pitch used. He reached behind himself and touched the scar. It was so pale now. It must have caught the light.

'Yeah,' Jack said.

'Do you know,' Gwyn said, his voice gentler than usual, 'I have often wished to have scars. To go into battle over and over again, to have nothing to show for it, there came a time when I wanted my body to show others what I was. My reputation does it for me now. But- you wear yours well, Jack.'

'Not you too,' Jack said, groaning as he pushed the drawer closed and rolled to his side looking between them both. 'Pitch already has a scar fetish.'

'I didn't say it was a fetish,' Gwyn said. 'Only that I think you wear them well. You're quite beautiful.'

'You say the sweetest things,' Jack said, as though teasing. He even managed to roll his eyes. But there was no denying how it felt to be complimented like that by *Gwyn* of all people. The guy who didn't seem to find anything or anyone beautiful at all.

Jack tossed the small jar to Pitch, who caught it easily with his free hand.

'Tell me how you want me,' Jack said to Pitch, feeling a combination of nervous and confident all at once. Nervous because it would be someone else's hands touching him, learning him that way. Confident because he'd had time now to learn how to not be shy about this. To learn how to simply celebrate himself. Confident because Pitch was there, and it wasn't Jack wearing the bondage, but Gwyn.

*What if it wasn't just once? What if we did this again?*

Jack wriggled stomach down on the bed when Pitch told him to, his side bumping against Gwyn's knee, Pitch's thigh. He ran his own hands through his hair, then steepled his fingers together and let frost run in fronds down his arms. The temperature contrast was sharp. The upper half of his body icy, the bottom half still tingling from Gwyn's mouth.

What if they did do it again? Would Gwyn mind? Would Pitch?

'Let me untie you for this,' Pitch said to Gwyn, his hands working quickly. Jack was surprised to hear Gwyn make the same fractious sound that Jack had made himself, after being released from bondage before he felt ready. And Pitch murmured the same soothing sound that he did to Jack, said something so low – perhaps directly into Gwyn's ear – that Jack couldn't actually make it out. And Gwyn made that low, soft sound again, but it was less stressed now, more accepting.

It started with Pitch's hands running soothingly over Jack's back, sometimes one of his hands would shift and fingers would brush over his lips, only ever dipping in shallowly when Jack opened his mouth. Then, at Pitch's direction, Gwyn straddled Jack's thighs and it was odd to feel that feathery light touch of someone else's hands stroking over the backs of his legs, his sides.

'I can be rough,' Gwyn said.

*Really doesn't seem like that's actually true,* Jack thought, even as he felt a flash of want and heat and trepidation all at once.

'That's why you're going to listen to me,' Pitch said, 'aren't you?'

‘I am only saying that- If you’re worried, it need not be any more than what it has been.’

Jack would have worried that Gwyn didn’t *want* to have sex with him, but the thumbs that swept over the lower curve of Jack’s ass gave an entirely different impression. It was concern, not a lack of wanting, not with the way he was being touched.

Jack’s breath shuddered out of him in a long sigh. One of Pitch’s hands curved over the back of his neck, the other pressed a hard line down the centre of his back, as though stretching him out into putty.

‘How do you feel?’ Pitch said to Jack.

‘Mm,’ Jack said, shifting quietly. ‘Good, I guess. On edge, a bit.’

‘Manageable? Or do you need a break?’

‘Really don’t want a break,’ Jack said, twisting to look over his shoulder at Gwyn. ‘Come on, I’ve had weeks to think about this. As long as you go slow, I mean – you *both* go slow – then... Like, why half-ass this?’

Jack felt fingers underneath his chin and lifted up, back arching, smiling into Pitch’s gentle kiss. His heart was fluttering, because Gwyn was not a small guy, he was at least as tall as Pitch, and broader, and *thicker*. But his heart skipping beats in the bedroom would have alarmed him once, now it just meant anticipation.

As he lowered himself to the mattress again, he reached behind himself and tangled his fingers through Gwyn’s hand. Gwyn was still for a moment, then he bent and lifted Jack’s hand to his mouth, and kissed the back of it carefully.

Jack felt so small as Pitch shifted and sat so that he could lean his body into Gwyn’s and his hands could stroke down towards Jack’s lower back. The anticipation ratcheted until he knew there was fear in there too, bubbling away inside of him. He shifted his arms, pressed his forehead onto one of his forearms, heard the lid screwing off the jar and then felt Pitch’s fingers gently tapping on his inner thigh, urging his legs apart.

Jack’s breathing hitched, his cock twitched but didn’t fill, and it was a faint flash of pleasure-pain after having already spent.

He made a faint sound when he felt slick fingers that weren’t Pitch’s tracing over him. Pitch’s thumb rested at the top of his ass, stroking slowly, and Jack’s breathing sped up. Pitch’s other hand came up and found the side of Jack’s face – fingers at his cheek, drawing lines down the side of his neck, overwhelming and soothing him all at once. He shifted, his legs parted a little more, he turned his head and mouthed gently at Pitch’s fingertips, licking him gently.

Fingers were still in his mouth when he felt the gentlest breaching at his entrance. A dipping in, a withdrawal, and then Pitch encouraging Gwyn:

‘That’s it, slow is better than fast.’

Jack could *feel* Gwyn’s fingers shaking. Could feel the index finger as it slid deeper, the way Gwyn’s whole hand seemed to tremble. And then Gwyn’s finger was pushing deeper and Jack moaned into Pitch’s fingers as heat filled him. Even if it wasn’t as intense as Pitch, it was still intense.

Gwyn rocked his finger back and forth, less sure than Pitch’s explorations, but still moving as

though he was familiar with all of this. When he stroked another finger over Jack's opening, Jack moaned, reached out and grasped blindly at Pitch's thigh.

'Easy, Jack,' Pitch said, his voice soothing. 'If you need him to slow down, just say.'

'M'good,' Jack managed, even as frost painted over Pitch's grey skin. 'Good.'

Gwyn gasped behind him, then said:

'He does get warmer.'

Pitch laughed, and Jack didn't feel like some cheap person being shared, but like a treasure.

Gwyn's fingers curled down, seeking with a sort of blind knowledge, and Jack cried out when blunt fingertips scraped over his prostate. Jack felt arousal bolt through him and he shifted absently, hand brushing against Pitch's cock as he dragged himself meaningfully over Pitch's lap – the angle awkward.

'Are you sure?' Pitch said, hesitating when he seemed to realise what Jack wanted. 'Jack, you don't have to do this. I know we've talked about it, but it may be too much.'

'Please,' Jack said, wishing the angles were better. 'Let me try.'

Pitch moved so that he was sitting cross-legged in front of Jack, and Jack pushed himself up to his elbows and let his lips rest against Pitch's cock. He didn't want to do anything yet, in case he used teeth accidentally with the sensations being sent through him. But still, now there was heat at both ends, and Jack thought he was melting. Gwyn's fingers still moved. Slow but inexorable, each thrust deep, and now that he knew where Jack's prostate was, he grazed over it every time. Lighter now, so that it wasn't some ache inside of him, but a teasing pleasure that made his gut tighten, his thighs tremble.

Eventually Jack felt comfortable enough to start licking Pitch's length, thinking that it was hard to believe there was ever a time when he couldn't do this at all. Now it was like a version of home. The musky rich scent was familiar. The heat against his face was like standing near a fireplace. His tongue started to warm, his mouth was wet, and he rocked back into Gwyn's touches with increasing sureness.

A third finger at his entrance and Jack paused and moaned, then dug his fingers into Pitch's legs because there was a burn that came with the stretch. Gwyn's fingers were thicker, and it didn't matter how slow he went, Jack knew he was a lot to take. But he liked it. Wanted to be consumed by it.

Gwyn's breathing was audible, shaking sometimes on the exhale.

'S'good,' Jack said against Pitch's length, hoping Gwyn could hear him.

'And you?' Pitch said, his voice clear. 'Is it good for you?'

'Yes,' Gwyn said, his voice thin. 'I still can't quite believe you both...suggested this.'

'Come here,' Pitch said, like it was reassurance and not a command. 'Come here. Lean up. Yes, that's it.'

Pitch shifted forward over Jack's back, and then Jack could hear them kissing. Gwyn's breathing cut off, and Pitch groaned into his mouth with a mix of hunger and happiness. The fingers inside of



Jack twitched, twitched again, and then went still.

‘That’s it,’ Pitch whispered. Gwyn’s other hand where it grasped Jack’s hip went limp. Then clutched even harder at Jack’s skin, almost bruising. Jack groaned, bucked, wanted that too. He didn’t want to be really hurt, but the idea he could be wearing bruises from this tomorrow, that he could see where Gwyn had wanted this so badly he couldn’t help himself? Jack wanted that.

‘I won’t last long,’ Gwyn said, like he was divulging some terrible truth.

‘No one cares,’ Jack said, and then realised that might have come across poorly. ‘I mean, Pitch has gotten me off in like thirty seconds before.’

‘See?’ Pitch said. ‘It’s fine.’

Gwyn said nothing else, but his fingers started moving again where they’d just been resting in Jack’s ass. He started thrusting once more, and Jack realised that he was half-hard – time was passing, his refractory period wasn’t *that* long, and Gwyn’s stimulation was gently ruthless.

Jack distracted himself, opened his mouth over the head of Pitch’s cock and drew it in, sucking at the tip, pressing his tongue into the nerves at the sensitive underside.

He wasn’t sure how much time had passed when Gwyn shifted so that it was his cock notching into place. Jack had to draw up off Pitch’s cock, and there was a hand stroking his side. Pitch’s hands were at his hair, and at the corner of his mouth, caressing his lower lip, making his whole face feel tingly.

Jack nodded, even though he wasn’t asked permission. And then, because nothing else happened, he said:

*‘Please, come on, just-’*

Gwyn pushed forwards, and he didn’t go as slowly as Jack had been lulled to expect. Once the head was in – Jack groaning at the stretch and further burn of it – it was as though Gwyn couldn’t help himself. His hips bucked in a sharp movement. Jack cried out when he was filled fast, his whole body locked up, and Gwyn didn’t say anything at all, only grasped Jack’s hips with two hard hands.

‘Fuck,’ Jack breathed.

‘Careful,’ Pitch said, and Gwyn made a faint, helpless sound.

‘How careful?’ Gwyn breathed.

‘Jack?’ Pitch said. ‘Too much?’

‘It’s always too much with you,’ Jack griped with a voice that broke. ‘Fuck. Hang on. Just hang on.’

He could feel Gwyn’s cock, feel it twitching inside of him, feel the bruises on both sides of hips. He could hear Pitch’s voice drifting to him from the past:

*‘What if he was rough? Do you think he’d be more direct than I am? I think, from the way he trains, he’d make quite a claim on you.’*

Jack had moaned back then to hear those words, and he moaned now to feel it.

'It's okay,' Jack said. 'It's good. It's good. It's a lot, but it's good.'

'You heard him,' Pitch said to Gwyn. 'I think you're good to carry on.'

'*Gods*,' Gwyn said, helplessly, and then bucked forwards again, and Jack bit down on Pitch's fingers without thinking, because he hadn't realised there was *more*. But Gwyn's hips were now flush against his ass, and Jack could feel balls pressing into his skin, and Pitch was stroking him soothingly but not telling Gwyn to 'stop' or 'slow down' or 'take it easy' and Jack knew that Pitch wanted this to be intense. Because Pitch loved those moments of consummation. Because Pitch seemed to need to overwhelm Jack like it was his life's work.

Jack wasn't even surprised when Pitch carefully encouraged Jack's mouth to widen. He knew what Pitch wanted.

'I don't want...to bite you by accident,' Jack managed.

'Try it and see how you go,' Pitch said. 'You only have to try.'

'I'm gonna die,' Jack laughed weakly. 'You're both gonna kill me.'

'Wait a moment,' Pitch said sharply to Gwyn, when Gwyn's hips shifted like he was going to start thrusting. 'Wait.'

Jack almost expected Gwyn to say something like 'but I'm the King,' instead, Gwyn's hips trembled, but didn't move.

*Jesus, he likes it. He likes being given orders. He hasn't fought back once. He's less mouthy than I am. He likes this.*

It wasn't until Jack had Pitch's cock in his mouth – a mild ache in his jaw and heat at both ends, melting him down – that Pitch must have given Gwyn the signal to move.

Gwyn started slow and steady at first, not quite gentle, but clearly trying to hold himself back. Even that was enough to have Jack's eyes roll back in his head. All his concentration went to not biting down accidentally, his mind clouded with swirls of warmth that stole his frost.

Jack winced when Gwyn picked up the pace – he was just rougher, even if he'd been attentive in his preparations. Pitch liked all his movements to be smooth, and even when he was fucking Jack fast and firmly, there was always such control in it. Gwyn pushed on the edge of too hard, withdrew on the edge of too fast, and Jack didn't know if he could take it.

But he wasn't in pain – mildly sore, but nothing damaging. And it felt amazing, overwhelming, and Jack realised that even as he wasn't sure if he could handle it, he *was*.

He gave himself up to it, then. Locked his jaw open around Pitch's cock and sucked hard, trying to match Gwyn's thrusts, all of them making a noise then. Pitch groaned low and deep, Gwyn's sounds cut off but frequent, and Jack whimpering higher than the both of them.

'I want to try something,' Pitch said, and Jack could tell, somehow, that Pitch wasn't talking to him. 'Gwyn, I want you to listen to me. Stop moving.'

Gwyn made a raw sound then, one that wasn't cut off in his throat, and he slid to a halt and was shaking so hard that Jack could feel it.

'*Why?*' Gwyn said.

‘Because I want you to,’ Pitch said, a smile in his voice. ‘Stay still, just for a minute, Gwyn.’

‘I can’t,’ Gwyn said.

‘You can, you’re doing it right now. You’re doing wonderfully. This will be the only time I ask you to stop. Yes?’

Jack used the moment of increased concentration to bob his head on Pitch’s cock. He didn’t bother taking him deep. He focused on what he could do. Move his tongue, create a good seal with his mouth, lick the flavour of him away until all he could taste was his own saliva and occasional moments of salty precome.

‘Gwyn,’ Pitch said, after more than a minute had passed. ‘Easy, you can move again. Until you finish now. If it pleases you.’

‘If it pleases me,’ Gwyn laughed, incredulous, but still, his hips began moving again. Slow at first, which didn’t seem to be for Jack’s consideration, but his own. Then, quickly, he sped up once more and Jack grunted, hung onto Pitch and the bed, boneless with warmth.

Jack moaned when he felt – only minutes later – Gwyn stutter to a halt followed by pulses of thick heat inside of him. He slumped, his mouth open against the side of Pitch’s cock, his hands opening and closing in weak reflex. His eyes stayed closed, even as Gwyn rubbed his hands up and down Jack’s back in long, hungry strokes. Then Gwyn withdrew carefully, hissing under his breath, before laying down alongside Jack and going limp next to him.

Pitch encouraged Jack to roll onto his side, facing Gwyn. He tilted Jack’s head up and met his eyes, searching his expression. Jack knew he was checking in, making sure Jack was all right. Jack nodded at the unspoken question in Pitch’s eyes. Smiled at the heat he still saw there.

‘You haven’t come yet,’ Jack said, brushing his fingers over Pitch’s cock. ‘I’m a bit tired, but if you wanted...’

‘If you don’t mind,’ Pitch said to Jack, ‘I’d like to know what it might be like to fuck the King of the Seelie fae.’

Beside him, Gwyn stiffened. ‘What?’

‘If you’re amenable, of course,’ Pitch said.

‘You...what?’ Gwyn said, his voice thick and rusty, his eyes opening as he looked up. ‘Why?’

‘I won’t hurt you,’ Pitch said, like Gwyn had asked a completely different question. ‘I’d like for us to remain friends after this. I have no agenda in mind, aside from wanting to see what it might be like to overwhelm you like that. To return the favour.’

Gwyn stared at him, and Jack reached out and pressed his hand flat to Gwyn’s side. Gwyn’s eyes snapped down, and Jack smiled in reassurance. Then, Gwyn’s eyes tracked back up to Pitch again.

‘You can read my fears, can’t you?’ Gwyn said.

‘Yes,’ Pitch said. ‘As always, it’s incomplete. But I have enough of a picture to know not to push you.’

‘I hadn’t thought...’ Gwyn said, and then he swallowed and cleared his throat. ‘It’s been a very long time.’

‘I gain nothing by hurting you,’ Pitch said patiently. ‘Not physically, nor in any other manner. Please, we are comrades in arms, are we not? Do you think I’d wish to risk any of that? I’m not that self-destructive – not anymore, anyway. There’s no one that can spar with me like you.’

Even that didn’t make Jack jealous, as it once would have.

After a long moment, Gwyn said: ‘As long as you don’t think less of me after.’

Jack looked at Pitch then, wondering what he was making of all of this. Jack was exhausted, sleepy, but he still had enough awareness to be worried. Pitch was looking at Gwyn as though momentarily perplexed, then he said:

‘Do you think I somehow think less of Jack? Or myself? He fucks me too, when the mood takes him.’

‘Yes,’ Gwyn said, like that was irrelevant. ‘But that’s different.’

‘Hm,’ Pitch said, but he didn’t push. Instead: ‘We don’t have to do this. I’ll not think less of you either way. Whether you say ‘yes’ or ‘no.’’

Pitch leaned down, shifted his entire position then so that he could kiss Gwyn gently. So that his long-fingered hand could hold Gwyn’s head still. After a few minutes, Jack watching lazily, his other hand pressed to the top of his cock – half-hard and not seeming to swell much further – Pitch withdrew and pressed his forehead into Gwyn’s.

‘I’ll not think less of you after,’ Pitch whispered. ‘I swear to you. It’s not in my vocabulary to do that. I never would.’

‘Okay,’ Gwyn said, his voice hushed. ‘Okay.’

Pitch kissed him again, and Jack licked at the taste on his own lips as he felt an odd sadness to think this might be the last time they ever did this. Gwyn obviously hadn’t ever learned how to just be fine with himself, the way Pitch had taught Jack to be. Gwyn might be bad at friendship, but like this, naked and in Jack and Pitch’s room, he was also awkward and vulnerable and sweet. And Jack thought that there could be room in his heart for Gwyn. He didn’t know to what capacity, he knew that Pitch would always be in the centre of his heart, right alongside his centre of freedom.

But that freedom was ping-ponging at him gently, reminding him that if he wanted this, he could have it. He just didn’t know what *this* was.

Jack watched with a lazy kind of hunger when Pitch shifted, took up the lubricant, and settled himself at Gwyn’s back. They were spooning, and Pitch was encouraging Gwyn to bend his upper leg towards his belly, and Jack knew from experience that it was a gentle position. Even as it meant that Jack would be able to see all of Gwyn’s expressions, watch the whole of it.

Pitch treated Gwyn with the same attentiveness and care that he showed Jack, and Gwyn was still uncertain. Game, but uncertain. Jack could tell when Pitch pressed a finger into him, both from the shifting of Pitch’s arm, but also the way Gwyn’s face changed. His cheeks reddened further, the flush extending down his neck, and his eyes squeezed shut. For a few seconds, Jack couldn’t tell if he hated it or liked it, but then Gwyn groaned and his mouth opened on a long inhale, and Jack thought maybe he did like it, but that he found it all very intense.

Jack shuffled forwards, pulling a pillow down to rest on it. He stroked Gwyn’s chest, then used something Pitch did to soothe him – rubbed circles into Gwyn’s chest, slow ones that would hopefully ground him too.

Gwyn blinked his eyes open, looked dazed. Jack could hear him swallow.

‘I didn’t know you could be like this,’ Jack said.

‘Like what?’ Gwyn said, his voice far deeper now.

‘Pretty,’ Jack said, and then smiled as Gwyn’s eyes widened. ‘I mean, just... I dunno. I like it. Means a lot, that you’d let us do this. I don’t think you know. We wouldn’t do it with anyone else.’

‘That’s true,’ Pitch said, even as his face was all concentration. He must have done something, for Gwyn’s teeth snapped together, his belly twitched. A sharp groan a moment later. ‘Easy now.’

Jack figured that was probably Gwyn’s prostate being touched. Maybe.

‘We really wouldn’t,’ Jack said warmly, even though he couldn’t tell if Gwyn could even hear him anymore. ‘We’ve never asked anyone else. We’ve never wanted to. I dunno if we ever would ask anyone else.’

Gwyn moaned, the sound soft and almost secretive, and Jack didn’t know if it was from the words or Pitch’s touch.

‘You’re special,’ Jack said. ‘Not ‘cuz you’re the King, or anything like that. You saved my life, you know.’

‘*Jack...*’ Gwyn said, his voice breaking, almost like he couldn’t bear to hear it. But when Jack looked up at Pitch, not knowing what to do, Pitch only nodded at him like he should continue.

‘I know it’s been a few years,’ Jack said, ‘and you have lots of stuff to do, but we think of you a lot. You gave me that crystal, too. Sometimes I wish you’d put that magic back in it again, so I could still like...send messages to you.’

Gwyn bit his bottom lip and then his legs shifted, suddenly, and Pitch hushed him even though he hadn’t made a sound. And Jack wondered if that was another finger being pushed into him. Jack bent forwards and kissed Gwyn’s chest, feeling that rise of muscle, thinking about all Gwyn’s power that – right now – was tame and yielding.

‘So you should like, let us do this,’ Jack said. ‘Because we just want you to feel good. I know it probably seems selfish that we asked you to do this, but we wouldn’t have asked just anyone. It had to be you.’

Gwyn turned his face towards the bed then, made a short, fractured sound that was muffled by fabric. And when Jack met Pitch’s eyes, Pitch – looking entirely serious, though hungry and aroused as well – nodded calmly. Jack was saying the right thing, then.

Jack reached out and stroked the muscles along Gwyn’s neck, his collarbones, his forearm where it had drifted down to clutch at the bed.

Jack didn’t know what else to say as Pitch continued to work him open. And Pitch was quiet, except for occasionally checking in with Gwyn, or absently soothing him. And when Pitch settled behind Gwyn, took up the position he’d use to enter him properly, Jack felt some fluttery emotion alongside a lust that was sleepy and didn’t demand anything from him. Jack couldn’t believe he was going to watch this. He’d get to enjoy it. He’d probably get off to it later.

‘Gwyn,’ Pitch said, ‘yes or no?’

Gwyn moaned softly, then nodded after a brief hesitation. Then nodded again.

‘Good,’ Pitch said. *‘Wonderful.’*

Gwyn’s breathing picked up and then hitched, his hips jerked forwards as Pitch leaned into him. Jack thought maybe it wasn’t to get away, sometimes it was all just a bit too much. Pitch had a determined, dark fire in his eyes that had Jack biting at his own lips, because being the recipient of that was incredible.

Pitch wasn’t rough, but he was certain about everything he was doing. A hand at Gwyn’s hip to pull him back into place and Jack saw Pitch close his eyes in a kind of bliss when Gwyn made a raw sound into the bed. And then Pitch’s hand slid up Gwyn’s bent leg and pulled it up further, made him more open.

There were a lot of different things Jack could get himself off to. Pitch had given him miles of fodder, and Jack had enough of his own, but this would be in the pile. This would maybe go in the top ten. Jack’s mouth opened, he panted quietly, and then unable to quite help himself, he scooted closer to Gwyn’s face and took a handful of his hair and pulled his head up, kissing his mouth as soon as he saw it.

Gwyn’s breath was hot and gusting and fast. And Jack made a happy, pleased sound when he felt the broken groan against his mouth, no doubt from something Pitch had done.

Jack slackened the grip in Gwyn’s hair and just kept kissing him, smiling when he thought of how he’d described it before. *Lightning...if it had a taste.*

He could feel Gwyn being rocked with Pitch’s thrusts now, felt breaths of air from Gwyn’s nose, or the moments when he moved away from Jack’s mouth to suck down a breath. But Gwyn went right back to kissing Jack as though – now that he knew it was an option – it was all he wanted to do.

A warm hand slid over Jack’s where it rested in Gwyn’s hair, and Jack lifted up away from Gwyn’s mouth to meet Pitch’s gaze. And when Pitch leaned forwards for his own kiss, Jack was only too happy to oblige, thinking that it just wasn’t fair that there wasn’t more of everyone to go around. But where physical limitations bothered him, Jack’s heart felt full and abundant and free, and it sang through his spirit, because he’d chosen this, because it would stay a part of him forever.

Jack went back to kissing Gwyn as Pitch moved away so he could pick up the pace. Jack had learned so much now. He knew that Pitch was closer to coming. He knew how it felt to be on the receiving end of that. He didn’t initially think Gwyn would feel spun apart by anything like this, but now he knew differently. Gwyn disintegrated into feeling and sensation just like Jack did – the sounds he made were different, but Jack knew the language.

Then Pitch was stilling, shuddering, his eyes closed, immersed in his own pleasure. And Jack licked over Gwyn’s mouth and felt possessive and protective and sure of something he hadn’t been sure of at the beginning of the night.

He knew he needed to get Pitch alone then, to talk to him privately.

That didn’t seem like it would be so difficult. As Pitch slid free, Gwyn slumped forwards, almost pinning Jack to the bed. His breathing was heavy, slowing, and Pitch placed a careful hand on Gwyn’s shoulder.

‘Rest for a few minutes,’ Pitch said softly.

Gwyn made a sound like he couldn't imagine doing anything else.

'I'll get us some cloths to clean up,' Pitch said, beaming at Jack, not looking like he'd just had a blowjob from Jack, or like he'd just fucked the King of the Seelie senseless. Aside from a few more lines at the corners of his eyes – which were like extra smile lines – he just seemed pleased.

'I'll help,' Jack said quickly, scooting off the bed and biting the inside of his lip when he felt come trickling down his legs.

Pitch hesitated, looked over Gwyn again, and then nodded quickly, seeming to sense that Jack wanted to talk to him.

When they had walked across the room into the large bathroom, Jack closing the heavy door and knowing Gwyn probably wouldn't be able to hear much at all, he was surprised into silence when two hands cupped his face.

'Are you okay?' Pitch said, concerned.

'What?' Jack said, and then he laughed softly. 'That's not why I came in here. Though, I'm a mess, can you pass me- Yeah, thanks, bloody hell, he comes like a... I dunno.'

Pitch pecked him briefly on the lips and then picked up two more hand towels and ran the tap, waiting for the water to heat.

'Pitch,' Jack said warily, 'you can like...say no. But um, what if we did this again?'

Pitch kept looking at the tap, his hand resting on it to gauge the temperature. For a long time he said nothing at all, and then he nodded like he'd been expecting the question.

'I mean, if he wanted to, and you wanted to,' Jack said. 'I don't- I mean, I want you, and us, and this, and I don't want my life to change much. But I just- Was it just me? I just feel like maybe we could, and it wouldn't hurt anything? He's got his own life, and so, he probably couldn't see us much anyway, right?'

Pitch was running the hand towels under the warm water, wringing them out deftly. Jack used the dry one to clean himself up, pressing an idle hand to the base of his cock. He was still half-hard, but it wasn't a bother, he could deal with it later if he still wanted to.

'And if you don't want it that's cool,' Jack said, 'because we could still be friends with him, right? And you know what would really help right now? If you like...*said something.*'

'Not all of us have your amazing powers of recovery after sex like that,' Pitch drawled.

'I know that's bullshit,' Jack laughed, 'you have better recovery than like, most people. Why are you hedging? Should I not-?'

Two fingers on his lips, and Pitch smiling down at him, looking tired and pleased and not upset.

'I want to,' Pitch said. 'But Jack, we're in...increasingly resilient places in our lives, and I'm not certain he is. For all that he is the King, and for all of his life experiences, I think he's fragile. Three hundred years didn't teach you much more than loneliness, I'm not sure three thousand years has taught him a great deal more.'

'Yeah, but that's why-'

‘Jack,’ Pitch said, his voice firmer than before, ‘this isn’t like getting a hermit crab. If you decide you’ve had enough in a year, or two years, we cannot rehome him at the King of the Seelie shelter.’

Jack opened his mouth to argue back, and then pressed his lips together, because he could see Pitch’s point. But he also didn’t think Pitch was really getting *his* point.

‘Okay,’ Jack said, slower than before, trying to calm down his racing heart. ‘But we’ve talked about him a bit since we’ve met him, and not in bad ways. And I’m not saying we do this two more times and quit. I dunno. There’s different types of relationship, right? So there’s you and me, and we’re like...I dunno, attached at the hip. And then – I dunno, I don’t want to give him less just because I’d see him less, I just don’t want to live with the guy either.’

‘It’s a big decision,’ Pitch said.

‘I *know* that, it’s why I’m talking with you in a bathroom like a dope instead of both of us being back out here with him! But I’m pretty sure I know my own mind, like...you can’t say all that shit about me having a type and then as soon as I go ‘oh hey, I do, and that was fun, and I really want to do it again, and I really like him, and I think he’s kind of broken, and *I know what that’s like*,’ you can’t just go – ‘well, no, Jack, because I’m more ancient than Father Time and I know better.’”

Pitch frowned at him, then took a deep, long breath. Jack steamrolled over whatever he was about to say.

‘I won’t do this if you don’t want it, of course not. But do you?’

‘Jack, I would never have suggested this in the first place if I wasn’t open to the possibility. Besides, we had so many different kinds of relationship on Lune. It seems so strange, how you all seem to need these rigid, fixed boundaries that hurt more people than it helps.’

‘Then can we just...ask him? And try?’ Jack said.

‘Yes,’ Pitch said, smiling ruefully. ‘Woe betide anyone who gets in your way when you’re on a mission. That old centre of resolve peeking through again?’

‘And fun,’ Jack said, beaming, ‘because that was *fun*.’

They exited the bathroom together after that. Gwyn wasn’t sleeping, exactly, but it looked like he wasn’t interested in moving. Pitch rubbed the handtowel down Gwyn’s back first, and at the sleepy, content sound he made, cleaned him up, ignoring the vexed sound Gwyn made when the towel slipped between his legs.

Jack lay on Pitch’s side, glad that the bed Pitch had was huge enough for the three of them. He lay his head on Pitch’s chest and listened to his heart beating.

It was a while later when Gwyn shifted. Jack watched as he sat up – not facing them – and then eased towards the edge of the bed. He kept expecting Gwyn to turn around, to look over his shoulder, but he didn’t. Jack watched his shoulders rise and fall in a sigh.

Gwyn stood and appeared to be looking around for his clothing. Only then did he look up. He seemed surprised to see Jack watching him.

‘I can show myself out,’ Gwyn said.

‘What? You’re leaving now?’



‘Yes,’ Gwyn said carefully, ‘is that not-? Is there some etiquette-’

‘It would be nice if you stayed,’ Pitch said, his voice sleepy and calm. ‘Until morning at least. We do breakfast.’

‘Oh,’ Gwyn said, hesitating in the process of picking up his shirt. Slowly, he straightened and looked around the room.

Jack couldn’t stand it. Pitch would do this in that steady and patient way he had of doing anything. It’d take forever. It’d give Gwyn too many chances to bolt. Jack knew that all too well. He knew what it was like to be ready to flee at a moment’s notice. It was breaking his heart.

‘Hey,’ Jack said, pushing up and clambering over Pitch’s torso and ignoring the grunt of discomfort Pitch gave in response. ‘Hey, don’t go yet. Snuggling’s the best part. And if you go, we can’t talk about whether or not we can do this again. Because I want to. I mean – if you do?’

Gwyn stared at Jack. It took Jack about a minute to realise that Gwyn wasn’t going to say anything at all. His knuckles were white where they clutched his shirt.

‘I want to,’ Jack said again firmly. ‘It’s cool if you don’t. But we’re friends, right? Friends stay until morning. And have breakfast. You can be a King after that.’

‘I’m a King all the time,’ Gwyn said, though he didn’t sound quite sure of himself.

‘In this house,’ Pitch murmured, ‘you’re Gwyn. And you’re staying for breakfast.’

Gwyn dropped the shirt back to the floor. But he didn’t come back to the bed.

‘Please stay,’ Jack said as encouragingly as he knew how. ‘We can talk about it all in the morning, if you like. If you don’t want to talk about it now. Or it’s...too much. I know it’s a lot to think about. Pitch has already told me it’s a lot to think about.’

‘You want this too?’ Gwyn said, his voice different, somehow making it clear he was talking to Pitch.

Pitch took a deep breath and moved his head slowly, like he was half-asleep. Jack didn’t buy it for a second anymore. He was acting. Maybe he really was sleepy, but Jack knew that Pitch wanted this too, he’d been open to it even before Jack had been. He just had a different approach. So Jack looked at Pitch and waited to see what he’d say.

‘I am, as they say, ‘easy like Sunday morning,’’ Pitch said with a wry smile, as Jack shoved him half-heartedly with the palm of his hand. Gwyn’s expression didn’t clear from its state of confusion, and Pitch shrugged a shoulder. ‘I enjoyed this. I would readily enjoy it again. But I would not risk the friendship for this, because this is something I see as strengthening a friendship, and if you cannot do this and remain friends with us, then no- No, I don’t want this too.’

‘What you both want, that’s what humans call ‘casual,’ is it not?’ Gwyn said.

‘There’s nothing casual about it,’ Pitch said, sounding a little more alert now. ‘Come and lie down. Think about it. There’s nothing to be afraid of.’

‘I so love how you do that,’ Gwyn said bitterly. ‘It would be a marvellous tactic in a war room.’

But Gwyn’s jaw set, and he walked back to the bed looking disgruntled, which Jack thought was cute, because his hair was a complete mess. His lips were still red and plumped from all that

kissing.

When Gwyn lay down close to them – but not close enough – Jack climbed on top of him and rested his head on Gwyn's chest instead.

*That is a fast heartbeat, oh my god.*

Gwyn looked down at him, frowning. Beside them both, Pitch chuckled.

'He does that,' Pitch said.

Then, moments later, Pitch came and leaned into both of them, lying down so that he had a leg hooked over Gwyn's leg, alongside Jack's. So that his arm was over Jack's back and tracing patterns into Gwyn's skin.

'I do it too,' Pitch said.

'You're both...remarkably tactile,' Gwyn said. But he didn't move, and his heartbeat was slowing. After a few more minutes, his muscles relaxed, and Pitch made an approving noise, smoothing Gwyn's hair away from where it had stuck to his ear.

'What if...this did happen again?' Gwyn said.

Jack smiled and ducked his head and pressed his lips to Gwyn's sternum.

'What if it did?' Jack said.

'I'd like that,' Gwyn said, like Jack had just asked him for the first time.

'Yeah?' Jack said, rubbing his cheek across Gwyn's skin. 'Really?'

*Play it smooth, Frost. Play it smooth.*

After a few more minutes – Jack certain that Gwyn wasn't going to answer – he felt a broad hand rest at his lower back. Gwyn's fingers curling into his skin.

'Yes,' Gwyn said finally. 'I'd like that.'

'It's the fact that we promised breakfast, isn't it?' Jack said, grinning up at him. 'Go on, you can admit it.'

Gwyn's laugh was quiet, deep, vibrating through Jack's chest.

'Yes,' Gwyn said. 'It was the offer of breakfast that won me over.'

But he looked at Jack for a long time after that, blue eyes twinkling, even as Jack was sure his own eyes were twinkling. Jack's mind was already rushing over the winds to imagine a future where they made this a regular part of their lives. Where they shared their happiness and their love with someone who needed it, where Jack knew that he would get so much in return.

He lay his head back down and let his eyes close, unable to keep the smile off his face. He was going to have thank Pitch later for introducing him to the 'what if' game.

## Chapter 3

### Chapter Notes

It's back! There will be at least three more chapters (including this one) before I'll close off the story again (until next time maybe). :D

This focuses very specifically on Jack and Gwyn's unique relationship with each other - as friends, as frenemies, and also as lovers (which is what this three chapter arc will follow). No new tags specifically (unless I haven't added angst or hurt/comfort, in which case I'll go do that right now), and feedback for this story is so much love. But otherwise, consider this an early Christmas update, and I hope the next two chapters don't take too long to get down on the page. You folks are the best, seriously. :)

The run of snow days that Jack had set off – at least three a day, for over a week – left him dizzy with happiness and tired all at once. He lazily coasted back on the winds to Kostroma, thinking that he'd drop in on North and Toothiana some other time. As for Bunnymund, well, Jack had only seen him two weeks earlier, and if they caught up too often, they always ended up sniping about something.

He capped the tops of the pine trees with more snow as he passed them – not that they needed it, but he liked the sound as they creaked under the weight and then had no choice but to let all the snow go at once. The trees would spring back into place, trunks straight and shaking, as though indignant that Jack had done that to them.

The double glass doors leading into Pitch's bedroom were wide open, and Jack whooped and shot towards them. It was only at the last minute that he saw Pitch looking up from where he stood over the bed, where what seemed to be hundreds of loose pages of paper rested.

'Jack! Jack *wait!*'

*Whoops.*

The snow and ice and wind followed him in as he hooked the crook of his staff around one of the posters on the four poster bed to catch himself.

Paper was *everywhere*. Jack tried not to laugh as it sailed around them in flurries, and he pressed his lips together, wondering just how much he'd messed things up. Probably a lot.

'Hi?' Jack said, trying for an innocent smile.

Pitch stood there for half a minute, just staring in dismay at the papers that were everywhere. Jack had no idea what they were, or where they'd come from. He could see blueprints on some, equations on others. Probably stuff that Pitch had salvaged from his Nightmare King days. It was hard to tell what Pitch did with his time, but he still snuck around in the shadows and he still went to old haunts to reclaim them, to make them his own.

'You'd make such a *fascinating* interior designer,' Pitch said, sighing and starting to snatch pieces of paper from the air. 'Also, good afternoon. No kiss?'

‘Waiting to see if you’ll yell.’

‘I don’t yell,’ Pitch said with an arch of his brow.

‘Sure,’ Jack said, rolling his eyes. ‘Sure you don’t. So that memory I have of you yelling at like, inanimate objects when they don’t *do what you want* is just completely in my imagination?’

‘You’re not an inanimate object,’ Pitch said, sauntering towards Jack and dropping the papers he’d gathered back onto the bed.

‘And I’m pretty sure I’m about to do what you want anyway?’ Jack said, and he leaned into Pitch, even as heat surrounded him. After so many days of ice and snow, Pitch’s warmth was overwhelming, and after a few moments, he sagged and listened to Pitch laughing gently against the side of his face.

‘Also,’ Jack added, trailing his fingers up the side of Pitch’s robes, ‘I’m pretty sure you yelled like a ton when you were trying to take over the world.’

Pitch clucked his tongue and then stepped backwards, poking Jack in the chest.

‘I’m *certain* you’re misremembering.’

‘Nope,’ Jack said. ‘There was Antarctica. And then there was the time when-’

He started laughing even before Pitch sprung and pounced on him. Jack had to admit, there was something to be said for living with someone who still had so much of a stalking predator inside of him. Especially when that predator was determined to tickle Jack to death.

\*

The next morning, Jack stretched out on the bed and thought about what they’d done with Gwyn, a few weeks ago.

Gwyn hadn’t contacted them again, and Jack had no way of reaching out to him. He basically had to hope that Gwyn would get in contact with Pitch to spar, or something else, but that hadn’t happened.

Had Gwyn even liked it? He seemed to, but he’d vanished pretty much as soon as breakfast was over, and he’d resisted enquiries into his wellbeing. Apparently he was always fine, and that was the end of that. Then Jack had tried bringing it up with Pitch, only for Pitch to say:

‘It’s not easy for him.’ A finality to the words, as though it was a closed subject.

But how could it be a closed subject, if they wanted it to happen again?

‘Hey, Pitch?’ Jack said, as Pitch came back into the bedroom with a large cup of tea for himself, and a cool iced peppermint tea for Jack. He set Jack’s glass on the side of the bed, and then retreated to his armchair, placing the cup down and steepling his fingers.

‘Mm?’ Pitch said.

‘Why isn’t it easy for him?’

Pitch’s eyes narrowed, but Jack knew that Pitch would know what he was talking about this time. Jack sat up and then wriggled forward on the bed, so that he was belly down on the soft blankets. He folded his arms beneath himself so he could keep an eye on Pitch.

'I mean,' Jack added, 'he's like the King. I just don't really get it? He kind of wasn't what I expected.'

'What did you expect?'

'Oh, well, you know I heard the rumours. Like they called him 'the hammer of the Seelie' and they *weren't* referring to like...his swordsmanship or his iron fist or whatever.'

Pitch huffed a breath of laughter and shook his head faintly, but then his expression turned troubled and he leaned back in the chair, looking out towards the snowy pine trees beyond.

'I can't read his fears properly,' Pitch said finally. 'They come, and I begin to get an idea- and then everything vanishes into mist. It's *frustrating*. I don't know exactly why he is the way that he is. But it's evident he's not used to any measure of care, and he's embarrassed to show any signs that he might be hungry for it. People like that- Let's just say it wasn't entirely surprising when I got that from *you*, given your beginnings in life, but I can't divine why it is that way with him.'

'Yeah,' Jack said. It wasn't the first time that Pitch had said he couldn't read Gwyn's fears. Still, it was a little annoying not having Pitch's ability to lean on all the time. Whenever Jack wasn't sure what was going on with North, or the others, he could just ask Pitch, 'What do you think?' Although sometimes Pitch sighed and responded with:

'Let them keep their fears to themselves, Jack.'

Jack didn't really see how that was *fair*, given Pitch knew everyone's fears all the time anyway, pretty much.

'And then he just ran away,' Jack said, thinking of the awkward goodbye at the end, followed by Gwyn simply walking out and teleporting away. 'Was that running away? I mean he did stay for breakfast.'

'Fae etiquette dictates that he must stay if he's invited for a meal and we insist upon it,' Pitch said wryly, 'rest-assured he would have run sooner.'

'He's so *weird*.'

'Jack,' Pitch said, giving him a *look*.

'He is!' Jack exclaimed. 'He was supposed to be all, 'Well thanks for the invitation you two I can't wait to pound Jack into the ground – I mean why do you think I *said* he wasn't going to fuck me at first? – what a great time for all involved let's do this again some other time.' He wasn't supposed to be all 'I've never done this before god I take direction *super well like even better than Jack does* okay *bye*.''

Jack had a hand on his hip, using his staff to emphasise his point.

'You do have quite a way of putting things,' Pitch said, and then he pursed his lips. 'You're not wrong.'

'He's the *King*. You know what it's like? Hey, remember when I was shit at learning and training and stuff? No wait, don't interrupt, I know I can *learn*, but you know, when it was all formal learning? Him being the way he was is like- It's- It would be like you discovering like deep down I'm some – god – war general for the seventeenth fleet of soldiers that train super hard.'

'I recall that fleet,' Pitch said quietly.

‘Right, from like the times of antiquity before the Earth was born and stuff,’ Jack said absently, and resisted the urge to grin at the look Pitch gave him.

Because that would never get old.

‘What’s wrong with him?’ Jack said.

‘If you ever talk about this with him, I don’t suggest you open the conversation with that.’

‘Yeah, no thanks, I’m not that self-sabotaging.’

Pitch lifted his brow as though to say, ‘Okay then.’

‘I haven’t had a major blow out with Bunny for ages,’ Jack said. ‘I can be tactful.’

‘If you ever wish to show me this skill of yours, I’d appreciate it.’

‘I just-’

‘Jack,’ Pitch said then, his voice firm, ‘I don’t have the answers you’re looking for. If you want to know more, you’ll have to *talk* to him. I can’t read his fears. I can’t tell you what you want to know. I have conclusions I’ve drawn, and-’

‘You don’t want to tell me,’ Jack said slowly. ‘What, you think I’ll hurt him with it?’

Pitch didn’t exactly grimace, but Jack still had a moment where he almost wanted to step back. Because that wasn’t fair. Why would he want to hurt Gwyn? He’d invited the guy into their lives. He’d...shared his body with him!

‘Pitch,’ Jack said, reproving.

‘I think your friendship with Gwyn is very complicated,’ Pitch said. ‘You have no small amount of history together, and a significant part of it happened when I wasn’t there, and you had no one else. It’s easy for you to antagonise him, and it’s easy for him to weather it. That’s a pattern you both fall into given enough time around each other.’

‘He’s cool about it,’ Jack said.

‘That wasn’t the side of you that he saw last time,’ Pitch said, meeting Jack’s eyes. ‘I think that allowed him to be more transparent. If you both fell into your old roles on *this* matter, I’m not sure he could weather it. Or rather, to be *blunt*, I think he would give the pretence of weathering it, and then I think he would never return.’

‘So you think I don’t know how much I could hurt him,’ Jack said, eyes narrowing. He wasn’t angry anymore. That was probably true. ‘Yeah, okay. Okay then, I’ll talk to him.’

‘I’m not sure that’s what I was going for,’ Pitch said.

‘It’s what you got. Can you organise the meeting? I have no way of contacting him.’

‘Ah yes, that’s me, personal assistant to the world’s tiniest, belligerent frost spirit.’

‘Yep,’ Jack said. ‘You’re the best.’

Pitch smiled back, though his eyes were still shadowed, and Jack thought he knew the feeling. Maybe doing this again wouldn’t be as simple as it had been the first time.

\*

Two weeks later, Gwyn turned up at Kostroma, and seemed surprised that Pitch wasn't there at all. Jack could tell, even though Gwyn was being nice enough, and brought another gift with him. Jack wondered if that was a fae thing, or a Gwyn thing. This time, it was a beautifully faceted crystal.

'Does it do anything?' Jack asked.

'No,' Gwyn said, looking like maybe it *should* do something, and that he'd made a mistake in not making sure it did. 'I thought it was well-formed.'

'Pretty, basically. You thought it was pretty,' Jack said, smiling and turning the crystal in his hands. It was large enough to fit in his entire palm, and was a brilliant red. Jack didn't know much about gemstones, but he had a feeling that humans might go nuts over something like this.

'It is,' Gwyn said, frowning at Jack.

Jack could already feel how easy it would be, to just start teasing him. But Gwyn had that sober, super-serious attitude about him all the time and Jack just wanted him to lighten up. Maybe antagonism worked some of the time, but it wouldn't work now.

'So, uh,' Jack said, looking around the kitchen, and then setting the crystal gently down on the counter. 'Okay, like, two things. Or maybe three things. I guess. Are you gonna sit or just stand there? Is this one of those things where you're visiting for like two minutes and then will leave because of some emergency?'

Gwyn blinked at him, and Jack cursed himself because damn it, he couldn't like, stop his *nature* around Gwyn. If Pitch was there, this would be way easier. But Pitch had elected to be absent.

*Probably because he's pretty damn confident in his ability to handle Gwyn. Or something.*

Gwyn walked over to one of the chairs and sat down, folding his hands beneath the table. He looked at Jack expectantly.

*So not awkward.*

'First thing,' Jack said, holding up a finger. 'I need a way to contact you. I promise I won't like... overuse it this time. No more teasing or just annoying you with it. But I don't want to go into the fae world to send a message to you like Pitch does, and sometimes I just want to talk to you? Like, chat?'

Gwyn leaned back in the chair. His expression was blank. It was the way Pitch made his own face sometimes. When he didn't want people to figure out what he was thinking about. Jack knew it meant Gwyn was *thinking* about something. Probably a lot of things.

'Okay,' Gwyn said finally. 'That seems fair. I'll not be able to visit often. Not more than once every two or three weeks.'

Jack nodded slowly, and tried to look like he was actually thinking that over, when the fact was he was kind of amazed that Gwyn was willing to see him that often. He didn't even see the other Guardians that much. Except for North, who was like, weird friendly Uncle North, or intimidating softie Dad North, or something.

'That sounds cool,' Jack said, and Gwyn nodded.

*This is so awkward oh my god. Pitch help. Send help. Send everyone.*

He was maybe more than a little pleased at the idea that the King of all the Seelie wanted to see him just about more than once a month. And having Gwyn there, in the kitchen, Jack just kept imagining all sorts of things. How strange it had been, Gwyn eating with them, mostly silent. And other, better images. How it had felt watching Gwyn while Pitch pretty much wrecked him right at the end, or kissing the noises right out of his mouth, and Gwyn just *letting* him.

Jack swallowed and looked down at the floor.

‘The second thing,’ Jack said. ‘I sort of want to be your friend. I know we’ve- I know there’s been arguments over whether we’re even friends or whatever in the past. And it’s not ‘sort of,’ I mean I *do* want to be- But I’m not really good at it. And you’re terrible at it.’

Gwyn looked up and Jack shrugged at him.

‘Sorry, but you kind of are.’

Gwyn opened his mouth and then miraculously *also* shrugged and just looked away. Jack was pretty sure Gwyn just had an ‘I got nothing’ moment.

‘So we’re both going to make mistakes?’ Jack added. ‘Because we’re both sort of not great at it.’

‘You have other friends,’ Gwyn said.

‘Sure I do,’ Jack said. ‘But they’re all pretty good at it. I mean North and Sandy and Toothiana are great. And Pitch is...well, whatever he is, that works for me. Bunnymund is like- actually not that great at it either. Or maybe he is? But then we’re not that compatible. But we make it work. He tries really hard. He lets me paint his eggs sometimes.’ Jack paused, and added: ‘That sounded euphemistic, right?’

Gwyn smirked, but said nothing.

‘And you have other friends,’ Jack said, in a way he hoped would lead Gwyn to actually *talk* to him.

Instead, the silence just seemed to grow between them, and then eventually Gwyn just took a deep breath and shrugged again.

‘I suppose I must.’

‘What about all the soldiers you just hang with? Like after battles and stuff?’

Gwyn squinted at him and Jack thought this was getting really uncomfortable and that was saying something because he always expected to be a little uncomfortable around Gwyn.

‘Do you want a drink or something? I’m not a great host. But we have stuff. There’s like juice and coffee and milk and other- We have water.’

‘No, thank you,’ Gwyn said, the picture of politeness. Gwyn. The guy who had basically ruined Jack’s life about a thousand times now just sitting there, in the kitchen. Polite.

Jack scowled at him, tried to think of what to do.

He kept expecting Gwyn to take the lead. As soon as he realised it, he knew how absurd it was. Gwyn didn’t often do that when it was just the two of them. If he was waiting for Gwyn to take



charge, he'd probably be waiting a pretty long time. Unless there was a war to win or something. And then what- he just snapped into war mode? Was that even a thing?

*So take the lead. What's the worst that could happen? Aside from him killing you. Which is an exaggeration. Because of all the things he's done, that's the one he hasn't even tried. And you've said some pretty crappy things to him in the past.*

Jack walked around the table to where Gwyn was sitting. Gwyn just watched him, and Jack felt nervous, but also a little better now that he had some kind of direction.

'Did you enjoy last time?' Jack said bluntly.

'I- Yes,' Gwyn said, like he was expecting some kind of trap.

*Honestly.*

It wasn't easy to lean forward and press his lips to Gwyn's, but he pretended like it was. He just pretended, for a moment, that he was Pitch. Someone who seemed to know what to do almost all the time.

He felt the small exhale against his mouth, which sounded like surprise. Jack kept his eyes closed, and with the hand not holding the staff, he touched Gwyn's shoulder. And then he focused on kissing. It was something he enjoyed. It was something he'd done before. With Gwyn, even.

And Gwyn just...let him.

Gwyn's mouth opened, and Jack lingered for a moment, before sliding his tongue inside to all that warmth. He leaned forward, and Gwyn leaned back. Not to get away, but yielding almost. Just *letting him*.

*Oh, man, okay, this is good. This is way easier than asking him if he wants a glass of milk.*

So Jack's fingers curled into Gwyn's shoulder, and then they trailed up the side of his neck – keeping close control on his frost – and then they reached that hair which was so soft. Just so tempting to shove his hands in and curl his fingers and grab handfuls. But Jack let his hand rest just on the edges, and he felt nervy and confident and a little bit high because Gwyn tasted good, and his tongue moved gently beneath Jack's but didn't try to take over, and then one of his broad hands came to rest carefully on Jack's hip.

When Jack drew back, Gwyn leaned forwards just a fraction, and then his eyes opened. He stared up and his cheeks were coloured. Jack figured this was also better than kissing Gwyn while Gwyn was standing, because Jack liked being able to kind of look down on him. Which wasn't weird at all.

'Should Pitch have been here, for this?' Gwyn said then.

'Not for kissing,' Jack said. Pitch probably wouldn't care no matter *what* Jack did, truthfully. But Jack wanted Pitch there for most of the other stuff.

'What did you like about it?' Jack said. 'Last time.'

He left his hand in Gwyn's hair, tracing a curl with his thumb. He stayed close. Gwyn's hand shifted on his hip, like he was trying to decide what to do, but eventually his hand stayed. His hand was warm and Jack was pretty sure it was broader than Pitch's.

'I just liked it,' Gwyn said. It reminded Jack of how things had been early on in his relationship with Pitch, when he hated vocalising the specific things he enjoyed, and just went with vagaries. He definitely enjoyed what they did, but saying that it was the tightness of the ropes or the fact that he was pretty much ruined afterwards? That took time.

'I keep expecting you to be commanding all the time,' Jack said, tilting his head. 'But you're really *not*. Is that why you don't like being King?'

Gwyn's eyebrows lifted, and Jack's hand shifted, tracing one of them. His eyebrows were soft too.

'I have many reasons to not enjoy being King,' Gwyn said.

'Yeah, but is that one of them?' Jack said, pressing, hoping that he wasn't being what Pitch would call antagonistic. 'I mean, I like it, that you have this side of you? I *really* like it. But fae seem pretty fixed about how they expect their royalty to be.'

'Do you wish me to be more commanding?'

'Nope,' Jack said.

In that moment, he *really* didn't. He kind of had an idea. He'd need to talk to Pitch about it, get some ideas maybe. In the meantime, he'd just keep tracing Gwyn's hairline and feel completely amazed that Gwyn just let it happen, even seemed to like it. He didn't lean into Jack's touch or anything, but his eyes got that slightly sleepy look to them. Jack knew what that look meant.

'I don't...' Gwyn hesitated, and only then did he look away. 'I don't wish for you to make a fool of me.'

'I'm pretty sure you can do that just fine on your own,' Jack mocked, without really thinking about it.

It was like stepping on a twig in a silent forest. Gwyn didn't jerk away from him, exactly, but he just moved backwards in the chair. His hand dropped away from Jack's hip.

Jack saw two roads branch out in front of him. The one where he stepped away and apologised and said he didn't mean it. And the one where- The one where he just tried to make up for it in another way.

So he moved forwards and placed his hand back in Gwyn's hair, and even as Gwyn's eyes widened, Jack pressed his mouth to Gwyn's and kissed him again. He could feel the tension this time. Feel the way that Gwyn maybe wasn't sure about it anymore. But he could pull away. He could teleport if he wanted. He could definitely overpower Jack. And Jack would check in on him in just- Just another minute.

Gwyn's mouth opened slowly, and Jack grazed his teeth against Gwyn's bottom lip, once, then twice, then as Gwyn's mouth opened on a gasp, Jack kissed him more thoroughly. His tongue glided along Gwyn's, his lips slanted, and he got a good handful of Gwyn's hair. And Gwyn relaxed beneath him, and then a little while later, made the smallest noise in the back of his throat. But it was a good noise, and Jack wanted to see how things were now, so he leaned back a little, kissed the corner of Gwyn's mouth.

'I don't want to make a fool of you,' Jack said. 'I don't. I know I can be a little shit. But I don't want to hurt you. I don't want to make fun of this. It feels special.'

He could feel Gwyn's breathing, this close. Feel the way it was shallow, and then caught at the

word 'special.' He remembered how Gwyn had reacted to all the things Jack had said to him, while Pitch was stretching him out, when Pitch fucked him. He remembered how Gwyn reacted to those words.

'But I want to talk to you about it,' Jack added. 'Because I- *we* can both tell you're not used to this. Like, any of it? And you said yourself, that you're not. And you don't need to tell me your dark history or whatever. You don't. But I feel like it could be really, really easy to hurt you. And I don't *want* to.'

'I'm not easy to hurt,' Gwyn said, with a kind of wry smile.

'Okay, so maybe not literally? You heal from everything. But you know what I mean, Gwyn. You can pretend you don't. But you so do. You wouldn't have- You were so worried last time that we were going to hurt you. You're like the most powerful person in the world or something, or one of them, and it's just- I want to do this again with you. And Pitch does. I just...'

He stroked his fingers behind Gwyn's ear absently. It felt good to just touch him. It felt like it was all more real.

'Did someone hurt you?' Jack said. 'I mean I know your parents don't like you. But did someone like- *hurt* you?'

Gwyn's expression flickered, then shuttered. It was like all the openness just vanished. But he didn't pull away, and he didn't look mad. After about half a minute, he actually leaned into Jack's touch. It was a tiny thing. But it was there.

Jack scratched his blunt nails over Gwyn's scalp and felt so stupidly powerful. Was this how Pitch felt all the time? With Jack? Knowing what he could see? What he was being allowed to do? What he could shatter in a moment?

'No,' Gwyn said eventually. 'Not in the way you're thinking.'

'So yes, then,' Jack said, ignoring the way Gwyn tensed. 'Yes in other ways.'

'Not in any way that matters.'

'It matters to *me*,' Jack said. 'And I like being like this with you. I like you being like this with me. Or the both of us. Or three of us, whatever. I mean obviously you can be however you want to. But I feel like this is something you want? Or...need? And look, I say that as someone who is kind of the same, y'know, with Pitch? I was lonely for ages.'

'You were,' Gwyn said. 'I've been surrounded by people since I was born.'

'That can be still be lonely,' Jack said calmly.

'I can't talk about this,' Gwyn said. He didn't sound upset or anything. It was just a simple statement.

'Yeah,' Jack said. 'I get that too.'

Gwyn smiled then, and it didn't seem sarcastic at all. If anything, it was warm.

'Yet here you are, talking about it,' Gwyn said.

'Oh, I can totally talk about *your* stuff,' Jack said, lightly teasing. 'That's way easier.'

Gwyn actually laughed then. It wasn't really out loud. But it was still laughter. And Jack figured if his heart could somehow do a fistbump inside of him, that was exactly what just happened.

'Just, for the record,' Jack added, 'friends don't draft other friends into wars. Deal?'

Gwyn's blue eyes went grave then, and he tilted his head back and considered Jack very carefully. Jack prepared to hear him say that he couldn't do it.

'Do you have a small knife?' Gwyn said then.

Jack's eyes widened.

'Pretty sure you don't need a knife, you could kill me with your bare hands or something. I mean I know I'm small too...'

Gwyn stared at him for a bit longer, and belatedly seemed to realise that Jack was joking. Jack was *sort of* joking. Why the hell did Gwyn need a knife?

'It's not for you,' Gwyn said, 'it's for me.'

'Oh, well, in *that* case,' Jack said, reluctantly stepping back from Gwyn and not liking that he had to break the physical contact. 'I mean if you want to cut yourself up to get out of the conversation that's totally cool. We have a door, but I can see how that wouldn't be as much of a dramatic statement.'

'I could do it with my bare hands if you like. That might be more dramatic.'

Jack grinned at him, even while he rummaged around in the drawers. How small was *small*? Pitch actually had a huge number of knives in all shapes and sizes. Jack had no idea why. He'd asked once, and it was one of those things Pitch just ignored like Jack hadn't even asked the question. Probably a Nightmare King thing.

He found a tiny boning knife, and he checked the blade against the flesh of his thumb. Not enough to hurt himself, but he could feel that it was sharp. He walked back over and handed it to Gwyn by the handle, *really* curious, and a little alarmed.

*Hi, Pitch. Yeah the meeting went great. I just handed Gwyn a knife and he went to town. It wasn't awkward at that point though. Just weird. Y'know.*

Gwyn spun the knife expertly in his fingers.

*I guess it is just like a really tiny sword or something. Show off.*

Jack was just about to say something, when Gwyn extended his right hand and placed the blade of the knife to the inside of his little finger. Jack was just about to say something *else*, when Gwyn said solemnly, meeting Jack's eyes:

'I, Gwyn ap Nudd, King of the Seelie Court, do swear on an oath of blood that I will not manipulate, trick, coerce, force or *make* Jack Frost of, ah, Kostroma, participate in any wars or battles.'

A hush seemed to fall over the whole room when Gwyn nicked his skin with the knife, so that a tiny amount of blood welled. Gwyn put the knife down after that, and looked at the blood. Then pursed his lips, as though he wasn't sure about what he'd done.

'I might, however, *ask*,' Gwyn added, with a half-smile on his face.

Jack stepped closer, until he was close enough that his knees brushed against the side of Gwyn's leg. He took Gwyn's hand and looked at the blood there.

'That was a big deal, huh?'

'Yes,' Gwyn said.

'Do I have to do it too? To seal the deal or something?'

'You can't,' Gwyn said. 'You're not fae. It wouldn't kill you if you broke the oath.'

Jack dropped Gwyn's hand. Gwyn just rested it palm down on the table, pretty casually.

'Dude, what the *hell*?'

'You're not *fully* fae,' Gwyn said, looking confused then. 'It might do *something* if you broke a blood-oath. Best not find out, I think. So no, it's not reciprocal anyway.'

'If you try and manipulate or trick or *whatever* me into a war, you'll die?'

Gwyn leaned back in the chair and considered Jack. 'I didn't think you'd take me at my word.'

'You could've just shaken my hand, or...'

'This way,' Gwyn said, 'you'll know.'

'Gwyn,' Jack said, and then felt something twist in his chest.

Would he have taken Gwyn at his word? Did it matter? He was kind of joking. Did Gwyn know that? He seemed to have known that. The light attitude had continued, and Gwyn had even smiled at him, and laughed. So then- Why would he even do something like that?

'Do you feel guilty?' Jack blurted. 'About all of that? The war? I mean not winning it, but, with this? With me?'

Gwyn's cheeks coloured freshly, and of all the things he could have done, he just *shrugged*.

'I know you had to,' Jack said.

'I know you would have preferred I didn't.'

'But I know you *had* to,' Jack insisted. 'There were a few communication things that were shit, okay, but there's water under the bridge and like, I know you *had* to.'

'Well, it can't ever happen again,' Gwyn said. 'Unless I ask in a way that isn't...underhanded, and you say yes.'

'Or you'll *die*.'

'Yes,' Gwyn said calmly.

'That's not a thing to be so calm about,' Jack exclaimed, taking a couple of steps back so he could throw his arm in the air to emphasise what he was saying. 'That's not- Who does that? Do fae just go around throwing casual statements about how they'll die unless they do or don't do something?'

Is that a thing?’

‘It’s not a thing,’ Gwyn said. ‘I haven’t- I’ve not made many of these.’

Jack stared at him, and Gwyn stared back. Then, abruptly, he looked away.

‘Should you have asked me first?’ Jack said.

‘I doubt you’d have said yes,’ Gwyn said. ‘But you wouldn’t have taken me at my word otherwise.’

*Okay, okay, you’re getting stuck. Concentrate.*

Jack looked at the side of Gwyn’s face and tried to figure it out. Whatever was going on, what mattered most, was that Gwyn really needed Jack to believe in his sincerity. Even to this point. Jack could keep yelling at him about it, but Gwyn was probably just going to get defensive. It was a pretty big thing to offer.

‘Hey,’ Jack said, ‘thanks.’

Gwyn looked at him sidelong, before turning and facing him.

‘You’re welcome,’ he said.

‘Okay so, so far we’ve like, you’re gonna figure out a way that I can contact you. You enjoyed what we did last time. Kissing you is the greatest. And you lay your life on the line about war and stuff. Seems like a productive day so far.’

‘Oh, I’d say so,’ Gwyn said. ‘Very productive.’

‘Now you sound like Pitch,’ Jack said. Which was kind of nice.

‘Is that a compliment?’

‘It kinda is,’ Jack said, walking forward again. He leaned his staff against a chair, pretty sure he wouldn’t need it. It was becoming way more important to kiss Gwyn again.

Gwyn who was weirdly cute. And as he leaned forwards – and miracle, Gwyn leaned forwards too this time – he slid both of his hands to either side of Gwyn’s face as Pitch had done to him about a thousand times, and held him in place, tilting his head up. This was, oh, Jack was going to get to tell Pitch that actually it was a super awesome meeting and that maybe Pitch did have good ideas sometimes.

Whatever Jack did, Gwyn seemed to like it. Whether Jack bit gently at his lips the way Pitch sometimes did to him. Whether he became more aggressive or backed off and was gentle. He blew a tiny powdery frost across Gwyn’s mouth and then when he licked that away with his warming tongue, Gwyn made a sound that was as melty as the ice.

Jack slid his hands back further and grasped Gwyn’s head, even as he felt his cock beginning to take an interest in what was happening. He wondered if Gwyn felt the same way. Gwyn shifted in his chair like he was trying to get comfortable. Jack wanted to drop his hand and touch, but he had a feeling that if he started, he wouldn’t want to stop. And this was only the second time they were doing this, and he wanted Pitch to be there.

Though it was hard, knowing Pitch wouldn’t even mind. Still, just kissing was good too. And

Gwyn wasn't pushing for more. It took him ages just to rest one of his hands on Jack's hip again.

Then a few minutes later, his other hand came up and rested on Jack's belly, just beneath his sternum. The touches were almost like Gwyn worried he was fragile. But now that Jack was gathering more strands of evidence about who Gwyn might actually *be*, he didn't think Gwyn thought Jack was fragile. It seemed more than anything, it was the other way around, and Gwyn didn't even know if he was allowed to touch.

So Jack moved one of his hands away from the back of Gwyn's head, and placed it over Gwyn's hand, where it rested on his torso. Then, because he was a sap, he linked his fingers with Gwyn's and squeezed, holding on, trying to offer some kind of reassurance.

Things came to a natural pause, and Jack moved back an inch.

'Hey,' Jack said, as Gwyn's eyes opened only slowly and Jack felt kind of ridiculously proud of himself that he'd managed to do that. To the King of the Seelie. A *King*. 'You know with like training, ages ago, you let me be in charge at first? So I could learn? Would you ever let me do that in the bedroom? Take charge?'

This close, Jack could see Gwyn's pupils expand. Could feel tension in Gwyn's hand where it rested on his torso. His fingers dug in just slightly.

A long pause, and Jack wondered if he'd stepped so far over the line now, he was about to find out what it was like to not see Gwyn for ages.

Gwyn looked aside, hiding his gaze beneath his lashes. 'Perhaps.'

*Perhaps.*

'That's not a no,' Jack said, his voice hushed.

Gwyn looked back to him, his lips pressing together. They were a little swollen now, and redder, because they'd been kissing. Because Jack had been kissing him.

'That's not a yes, either,' Gwyn said, seriously.

'Okay,' Jack said, pressing his thumb against the corner of Gwyn's mouth like Pitch did to him sometimes. Gwyn's eyelashes didn't quite flutter, but they started to sag, and it seemed like Gwyn was having to make himself concentrate.

Jack forced himself to think, and think fast, when all he wanted to do was kiss that mouth open again.

*So I think he wants this, but he's scared of it. He was scared of it with Pitch too. But he still let Pitch. But maybe that was because he'd already like, come and was tired and stuff? Or...maybe because compared to him I'm little and probably even twerpy to him and he's the King.*

'It'd be a secret,' Jack said. 'Between you and me and Pitch.'

'For how long?' Gwyn said, staring up at Jack, not even blinking. 'How long? You don't live out a human lifespan, Jack. And even for them, they can hardly keep a secret even when they want to. And here we are, and we live...if not forever, then- What's to stop you from one day rediscovering all those reasons you couldn't stand me, and then flippantly telling others – the Guardians – what has happened here?'

Jack thought about Pitch's words of caution, and he thought about how it wasn't fair that Gwyn said things that made his chest *hurt* so bad. Did Jack ever do this to Pitch? Like this?

'I never hated you,' Jack said warily.

Gwyn laughed softly, but it wasn't humour, and it didn't feel good to hear.

'I *never* did,' Jack said stubbornly.

'Okay,' Gwyn said, and though he wasn't mocking, it was clear that he didn't believe Jack for a second.

'I can't give you an oath,' Jack said. 'But I would. I'm not gonna just spill things that *matter* like this to the Guardians. And who else am I gonna tell? Children? Come *on*, Gwyn. When we kissed in that mountain cave, the only person – aside from Pitch - I ever told was North. It wasn't to make fun of you for having that nightmare or being that...affected by it. It was because *I* was a wreck about things with Pitch.

'I know we've had our differences and that we *have* our differences like, that's *obvious*. But waking up in the mountain and seeing you like that, I don't ever want to be someone who thinks that you being more open with me is something to make fun of. I might do it by accident when it's the two of us. But with others?'

'You make a persuasive argument,' Gwyn said slowly. But his expression was still closed off.

Jack stroked Gwyn's cheekbone. His skin was warm. Not like Pitch's, but still warmer than most.

A fierce protective need stole over him then. It was stronger than the ache in his chest, and it was shocking in its sudden, blazing intensity. Surprising, because he was feeling it for someone who didn't need it from him. Who didn't need it from anyone.

*Maybe he does, though.*

'I like you,' Jack said, swallowing, and having no idea what he was even doing anymore. 'And you don't have to say yes to anything I want. Or anything Pitch wants. Or anything the both of us want. And you can change your mind. I like you, though. I want to know what it could be like. You...letting me take charge. I'm not like Pitch, I don't have much practice, and I'm not suave like him and I'm not-'

Gwyn's hand turned where it had rested on Jack's torso. Jack moved his hand away to give him space, but Gwyn only grabbed hold of it, and threaded his fingers through Jack's. And then he was just holding Jack's hand, looking down at it.

'It seems,' Gwyn said, and then hesitated, before taking a breath. 'It seems as though everyone in the fae world is very charming sometimes. Or suave. Whichever words apply. Whatever this is, it is different to what I've known in the past. I'm not accustomed to other people holding power over me, and I don't always enjoy it.'

'But sometimes you do,' Jack said. 'You did last time.'

'You and Pitch have something very important. It was different to be allowed to be a part of that. It was pleasant.'

'It was hot as hell,' Jack said, and Gwyn laughed then. Not that soft laughter of before, but something louder, stronger. When he looked up at Jack, his pale blue eyes sparkled. *Sparkled*.



Jack leaned down then and kissed him softly, lingering. Nothing claiming or owning, just sweet. He was surprised when Gwyn returned it. Both of their closed mouths pressed together, and their breaths joining.

When they moved away, Gwyn looked back down at their hands again. Gwyn's hand was sweaty. He had callouses. Way more than Pitch, who had a ton from working with his axe. But he supposed Gwyn trained more, and actually battled and stuff.

'I have no skill like Ondine, in seeing the future,' Gwyn said, his voice muted. 'But I have a vision of how this will end. You both allow me into this sacred thing that you have, until you realise that I am desecrating it somehow. Then, you show me the door, which I will understand, and it will even seem amicable. But over time, perhaps a bitterness between the two of you, not only that I hurt you in the past, but that I touched this other part of your lives that belonged only to you and he. And bitterness becomes words that harm, later. A way to balance the scales.'

Jack felt like he couldn't breathe. He felt like he needed to repeat all of that, word for word, to Pitch later. So that he could share whatever his chest was doing because that was a pain he didn't want to carry on his own.

'I wouldn't blame you,' Gwyn said, swallowing audibly. Then he looked up, frowning. 'But I'd like to avoid it, if I may.'

'Me too,' Jack said, his voice cracking.

'So that's why we can't-'

'Everything you just said- I don't want to be- that's *bullshit*, Gwyn.'

Gwyn's eyes widened. He looked like he was going to say something, and then pressed his lips together.

'No, no,' Jack shook his head, squeezing Gwyn's hand and realising that he was letting go of his ice. He clamped down on himself, getting it under control. 'Just- You're getting it wrong. It's not- God, Pitch could explain this so much better than I can. Oh my god. Desecrating it? What? You're not a *pollutant*, you can't- If we invite you into what we have, it's because we *want* to, and because it's also different. Pitch and I are the two of us. Pitch has said it to me enough times that I actually believe it now, pretty much, almost most of the time. I guess. But we are like bombproof. If you and all of *that* in the past and everything couldn't break us- If the scarf and me *lying* to him and getting through nightmares and his grief and everything-'

But even that wasn't right. To say: *We're stronger than you*. That wasn't right either.

'You're special,' Jack said, staring at him. 'We wouldn't have invited anyone else. We probably *won't* ever invite anyone else. Pitch thinks you're amazing. He always has. Even when he's been mad. I think you're wicked powerful, and a bit of a dick sometimes, but you *are*. I think you like that I don't pretend you're some wholesome, pure, good person when you're just a *guy*.'

Jack grit his teeth because he wasn't even close to making his point, and this was too easy to ruin. Too easy to muck up. He didn't want this ending with Pitch coming home and Jack pointing out that Pitch had been right all along, Jack really had no idea how easy it was to hurt Gwyn.

'You say what Pitch and I have is sacred,' Jack said finally, blowing out a hard exhale. 'Well you having that with us *is too*. It's not a favour we're doing you. We're not obligated to you. We're both pretty sure we never want to be in any kind of debt to you, and you're *not* in any kind of debt

to us. Did you sleep with us before because you thought you *owed* us?’

The very slightest hesitation, and Jack felt suddenly queasy.

‘You-’

‘No,’ Gwyn said, weakly, ‘it’s not quite- I wondered. I only wondered.’

‘Why are you like this?’ Jack said, and realised he’d lost control of everything. He sounded plaintive, and he saw the moment that Gwyn couldn’t handle it.

Gwyn pushed backwards in his chair. Let go of Jack’s hand even as Jack reached out for him. Stood, even as Jack hopped on the winds to follow him. If Jack was going to ruin it, he wasn’t going to let it go without a fight.

‘This isn’t going to work,’ Gwyn said.

‘Why?’ Jack demanded. ‘*Why?* I want it to! What am I doing wrong?’

The look Gwyn gave him was tortured, but he still moved several steps towards the doorway, the one that would lead to the corridor, that would lead outside, that would lead to Gwyn disappearing into a ball of light.

‘Why?’ Jack whispered. Then he laughed, and heard himself, and knew Pitch would have stopped this ages ago. Just smoothed it over somehow. But Jack only had himself, and he was way more raw than Pitch could ever be. ‘Is it me? I *know* I’m not explaining things right. And I *know* there’s so much you’re not telling me. And I knew we were going to make mistakes but can you just not run away from me when I make them? Or you make them? Or- If you run away, can you just tell me you’ll *come back?*’

Gwyn hesitated with his hand on the doorframe. He turned and looked over his shoulder at Jack.

‘I cannot fathom why you would want it to be me,’ Gwyn said, and Jack threw both of his hands in the air.

‘So? I couldn’t figure out why Pitch wanted *me*. I still took a chance, didn’t I? I *still* don’t know why he wants me, sometimes. Look at him, Gwyn. Look at how *amazing* he is. He could have anyone he wanted, and he picked me. And he said something to me ages ago, which is that- Even if I feel like I’m too small, and not enough – not experienced enough, not skilled enough, not clever enough, not serious enough – the fact is, he’s not wrong to feel the way he does about me. I’m not wrong to feel the way I do about *you*.’

Gwyn’s fingers clenched hard on the doorframe. A moment later, the wood crunched and Gwyn dropped his hand quickly. He’d left impressions in the wood.

*He’s so strong. That’s insane.*

‘I can pick someone who’s not perfect,’ Jack said. ‘I can pick whoever I want.’

Gwyn faced him and Jack shoved one of his hands into the pocket at the front of his hoodie.

‘The more I learn about you,’ Jack said, voice hoarse, ‘the more I don’t want *anything* to hurt you.’

A long silence then, and Gwyn stepped back into the kitchen. Jack watched in confusion as he walked around the kitchen table to the red gem that Jack had placed on the countertop. He picked it

up in both of his hands.

Jack almost laughed.

*Great. Now he's going to leave and take his gift with him. That's got to be fae for, 'Everything is messed up.'*

But Gwyn didn't leave. He stared down at the gem and then Jack frowned when he felt something change in the atmosphere around him. It was like a weather shift, when a storm rolled in and the pressure changed. Jack looked around, and then stared at Gwyn holding the gem and realised that he must be doing it. But Jack didn't know why, and he didn't want to interrupt.

Seconds became minutes, and minutes stretched on even longer. Until Jack stopped hovering on the winds and perched on his chair instead, watching Gwyn quietly.

Eventually, the pressure in the air seemed to ease and Gwyn walked over and handed Jack the red crystal.

'Try it,' Gwyn said.

'What?'

'Try and contact me with it. Like before. With the stone.'

*Oh.*

Jack held it and felt how warm it was now, from Gwyn's hands, or maybe from magic. Jack didn't really know how that worked, exactly. But he sent out a mental call for Gwyn, like he used to back in the day.

Gwyn took a breath, then nodded once.

'It works. There. You have a way of reaching me.'

'So I guess this is you leaving, right?' Jack said, feeling tired.

'No,' Gwyn said, sounding just as weary. 'This is me taking you up on your offer of a drink. I think I'd like some milk, if you have any?'

Jack stared at him, and Gwyn eventually met his eyes, looking sheepish.

'Milk,' Jack said, and then smiled a little. 'Cool. I can do that. I can even add ice. You know, because I'm magic too.'

Gwyn smiled, and Jack returned it, and then he hopped off the chair, glad to have something to do.

\*

Later still, Jack and Gwyn sat side by side on the bed they'd all shared together. Gwyn sipped politely at his glass of milk, and Jack was amazed at how cordial he was about it. Because Jack had tasted faery cow milk, and he knew there was *zero* comparison between that and what cows in the human realm produced. *Zero*. Even Jack had complained about milk in the human realm when he'd come back.

'We're exhausting,' Jack said.

Gwyn laughed then, the sound caustic and rough.

‘I mean I’m *tired*,’ Jack added.

‘Me too,’ Gwyn said, and Jack could hear the smile in his voice. He leaned his shoulder into Gwyn’s arm. Sitting side by side, he couldn’t bump shoulders with Gwyn, because he was too short. Gwyn nudged very slightly back.

Jack thought of the divots in the wood of the doorframe downstairs, and wondered how hard Gwyn had to control himself, to be so gentle.

‘I thought you were going to run out,’ Jack said. ‘I mean in a Kingly way, but still.’

‘So did I,’ Gwyn said.

‘What stopped you?’

Gwyn was silent for a long time, and then he sipped at his milk, and then he still said nothing. Jack leaned his head into Gwyn’s shoulder and felt how warm he was, and how good that was. He liked who he was, he was used to the cold, but he missed warmth. Especially body warmth.

Pitch said he’d probably always be a little touch-hungry.

Gwyn took a breath.

‘There’s no one in the world who cares if I get hurt,’ Gwyn said. ‘There are people who want me to be hurt. And people who plan for it. And people who are bothered by it. And people who are concerned for their militaries or battles if I am. And that feels like regard, sometimes. But I know it’s not regard for me, but only a- Also, they trust that if I’m hurt, I’ll recover. I always recover. And they know that if I’m hurt to a point where I can’t recover, another can be found to do my job. I’m not the only War General. I won’t be the only King.’

Jack nodded slowly. Thought about how Gwyn had told him once that his whole family didn’t like him, didn’t want him to be King. And then only recently, Jack talking about how Gwyn had all his soldier friends, and Gwyn squinting at him like Jack wasn’t really making any sense.

‘You said you didn’t want anything to hurt me,’ Gwyn said, sounding slightly awed. ‘*Me*.’

‘Is that really so weird?’

‘I always recover,’ Gwyn said, sighing. ‘I always recover. So no one has to *want* it, because it will never matter in the grand scheme of things. It doesn’t matter if someone’s hurting, if they can still function, perform their tasks, take responsibility for those things that need doing.’

‘Yeah,’ Jack said, his hand reaching out to the small of Gwyn’s back and just resting there. ‘I think you need us.’

‘But you don’t need me,’ Gwyn said.

‘And with no one ever really looking out for you, the only person who can stop you from being hurt – who *wants* to really stop you from being hurt...that’s only ever been you, hasn’t it? And so now you have this thing, and maybe you *do* want it, but it could hurt you so bad.’

‘That’s about the sum of it. Do you think me a coward, for being this way?’

Jack thought about how he’d been so terrified of what he had with Pitch in the beginning. *Terrified*.

He wasn't really the kind of person to run, exactly, but he'd asked all the time. Was it real? Did it matter? Did Pitch care? How could he care? Did he really want Jack?

And Pitch had the convenience of being able to see all his fears, the advantage of being able to answer them before Jack could even voice them.

'You're not a coward,' Jack said. 'Even if you run and say no. I'll get it.'

Gwyn was silent for a long time.

Eventually Jack said:

'Do you want to be needed? By us? Wouldn't that just be annoying to you?'

'Maybe,' Gwyn said, sounding tired still, which made it all seem even sadder. Did he even know what he wanted?

Jack made himself focus on what he did know about Gwyn.

'You enjoyed last time,' Jack said, a statement rather than a question.

Gwyn nodded.

'And you're not one hundred percent against the idea of me taking charge.'

A slight pause, then Gwyn nodded again.

'You should come over for dinner next time,' Jack said, nodding decisively. 'Not for sex, or whatever. But just dinner. And hanging out. There's a path near here, it winds along the river. The river is frozen at the moment, but-'

'I know it,' Gwyn said. 'It's a charming walk.'

'Do you just know all the forests or something?' Jack said, laughing.

'I have never met a hound that was not a good hound, and I have never met a forest that was not a good forest,' Gwyn said, a sureness in his voice that had been lacking so often in their conversation. Jack was a little relieved to know it was still there. Which was ridiculous. Gwyn was one of the most assured people ever.

'What about *evil* forests with like...trolls and stuff?'

'They're quieter and I'm more likely to be left alone.'

'Forests really filled with fae then. Just absolutely *packed* with fae,' Jack said.

'The trees are still very calm, and everyone is often happy to be there, in the forest.'

'Okay so what about frost spirits? They all great too?' Jack said, teasing. A little.

'Not all of them,' Gwyn said slowly. Then he turned and looked down at Jack. 'But there's one that's quite unparalleled.'

Jack bit his lower lip, and Gwyn got a strange *look* on his face that was almost sly, and then he said:

‘Perhaps I’ll introduce you one day.’

‘You are the *worst*,’ Jack said, shoving him, laughing.

Gwyn laughed too, and it was that loud striking sound that Jack remembered. Jack took a deep breath and found some comfort in it. The deep steel beneath it. If Gwyn was more fragile than Jack had realised, then he’d need that strength to deal with everything.

But Jack wanted Gwyn to let himself be protected by someone sometimes, and Jack was pretty sure he wanted to be a protector now.

He’d have to talk to Pitch about it.

That was going to be a weird conversation, but it was one he needed to have.

*Hi, Pitch, I’ve never really wanted a pet or anything, or kids, but can we adopt the King of the Seelie?*

‘You really are quite remarkable,’ Gwyn said, and Jack leaned back into him.

‘Yeah, well, you know what the kids say. Takes one to know one.’

He thought Gwyn would say something after that, but he was quiet. Jack thought about filling the room with words, but instead he thought of how often he and Pitch could just sit and do their own thing, and he wondered if Gwyn would be more comfortable just the two of them sitting side by side. It wasn’t like it was hard.

It was kind of exactly what he needed, after the day he’d had. He thought it might be the same for Gwyn, too.

## Chapter 4

### Chapter Notes

Because apparently I just really needed to write a two part sex scene between Jack and Gwyn. (This is part one).

As soon as Pitch returned after Jack's meeting with Gwyn, Jack found himself just talking about all of it. Messily, out of order. He talked while Pitch made himself some hot cocoa and took it up the stairs even though he could have just teleported there easily. He talked while Pitch settled down in his armchair and listened thoughtfully, sipping at the cocoa. And he talked long past the empty mug of cocoa being placed on the side table, by Pitch's latest notebook

'I mean,' Jack said, waving his hands around, 'the blood oath thing, it can kill him? *For real?*'

'Mm,' Pitch said in agreement.

Pitch hadn't really spoken much. A few times he asked questions that indicated he wanted Jack to explain something more, but he'd not said anything about whether Jack had done well, or whether he'd pushed too hard, or whether the whole thing was a total disaster. The only thing he'd seemed surprised about was the blood oath, and even then, he was being pretty unaffected by it all.

'Why don't you think this is a bigger deal?' Jack said finally.

'I think it's very important, all that you've learned,' Pitch said. 'I had an instinct about some of it. It seems that the fae around Gwyn may be unduly prejudiced towards anyone who may be submissive in nature. It could be a class matter, but I doubt his judgement on the matter is entirely self-generated.'

'You could just say: 'the people around Gwyn see subbing as a weakness.' That's way easier.'

'Yes, but why would I do that, when I have you to do it for me?' Pitch said.

Jack tilted his head, then shrugged. 'Fair.'

'I have some ideas about how you might find and follow the thread of his submission,' Pitch said. 'If you're open to hearing them.'

'Yeah,' Jack said. 'Of course. But you'll be there, so...'

He knew Pitch well enough now, to know that his assumption might be wrong. He pressed his lips together, then took a breath.

'Aren't you going to be there?' Jack said.

'If you need me to be, I will,' Pitch replied.

'But?'

'I suspect it will be too overwhelming for him to have both of us there, this time. Additionally,

Jack, I trust you. You're obviously able to find out a lot of genuine information about him when it's just the two of you, and you're far more capable than you realise. You described a situation where someone was tense, but was willing to give some of that tension to you when you took control of matters. There were places where it's clear you made decisions in Gwyn's best interests, which is a wonderful sign. I'll be there however much you need me to be, of course, but think about it.'

Jack was thinking about it. He kept thinking he should be arguing for Pitch to stay the entire time, but he could see the truth of it now. Gwyn could run, if both Jack and Pitch held control at the same time. There was no way around that.

'You trust me,' Jack said. 'In *this*? Like of all the things, you'd pick-'

'Yes,' Pitch said, watching Jack calmly. 'Perhaps not a few weeks ago. But yes, I do.'

'After what I just told you. All that crazy.'

Pitch's nostrils flared on a silent laugh, and then he nodded.

'I don't even know if I *want* to take control like that,' Jack said.

'Don't you?' Pitch said, brows lifting in curiosity.

'I always thought of myself as being a certain way,' Jack said. 'Like, I met you, and I'm a certain way around you, so I thought like- that's just who I was? But now I'm not sure if that's true? It's just, I mean, I like submitting,' Jack said. 'But I think- I think that's something I only really want to do for you.'

Pitch shifted in his chair and looked entirely too satisfied with himself. He even smirked. Jack almost got completely derailed off what he was trying to say, because that look did things to him. But he made himself continue, because it was important.

'I think I want him to submit to me,' Jack said. 'Like I do for you. I mean not the same but- I didn't think- I didn't know that about myself? Because I don't really want that from you? I mean I know I've topped a few times but you're always the one calling the shots. So I didn't even *know* that I could- But with him it just seems to be the way it should be.'

'It's natural,' Pitch said quietly.

'And I'm worried I'm going to mess it up, like big time,' Jack said. 'Everything is a minefield, and I can't read his fears or anything, and-'

'Jack, most people can't read other people's fears and they manage to work out a power dynamic or a power exchange quite well, with enough communication.'

'You should've seen him,' Jack said, shaking his head. 'I just... He's *fragile*.'

'I know,' Pitch said.

Jack hesitated, then walked over to the armchair and ended up perching on the armrest, leaning into Pitch's side.

'You know,' Jack said.

'I've known for some time.'

'You could've told me?' Jack said.



‘You needed to find it out for yourself,’ Pitch said. ‘What would I say? If I’d told you boldly, back when we were still fighting the Unseelie, you’d not have believed me. Or at least, not entirely. But I think you now understand that it’s far more than just something that you might glimpse in a moment, after he wakes from a nightmare in a mountain. It’s also unwise to think that’s all he is. It’s a complicated situation, and if you want him to submit to you, you need to make space for that, instead of hoping that you can simplify things.’

‘Huh,’ Jack said. ‘I do that, don’t I?’

‘There’s no shame in wanting people to be happy, and wanting to soothe away what hurts,’ Pitch said. ‘But what if I told you that it may be years, or decades, before you could do either for someone like Gwyn?’

Jack blinked, and then turned to face Pitch, who looked entirely serious. Pitch grimaced, and then reached up and stroked a finger down Jack’s cheek. Jack leaned into it, eyes lidding.

‘What if I told you,’ Pitch continued, ‘that the most you could likely hope for is that he enjoys the experience at least on some level, and doesn’t reject the idea of it happening again outright?’

‘The ‘what if’ game suddenly became super serious,’ Jack said, on a half-smile. The fact was, he was already nebulously aware of what Pitch was saying. It seemed so much bigger than himself, but he liked that Pitch could take the hugeness of it and find words for it. The weirdest part was how on board Jack was with it all.

‘Then yeah,’ Jack said. ‘I’m up for that. Are you? Is this- Because this is obviously a lot more than just, ‘hi, Gwyn, let’s have sex a handful of times and then bye.’ Right? This is way bigger than that.’

‘It was always a little larger than you thought it was,’ Pitch said, smiling and stroking Jack’s hair – following the line of it behind his ears. Jack shivered, closed his eyes, leaned into Pitch harder and was grateful that he could have this. That they’d found it together.

‘I just don’t get it,’ Jack said. ‘I mean, even from the beginning, I always had a weird connection with him. I think he felt it too. But it wasn’t like just...friendship. I don’t mean I thought about sex with him, but it’s like, I see him hiding behind things, or not telling me the truth, or just doing something *wrong* and I want to- I find myself pushing at him or whatever. Like I see North hiding in work and I don’t push at him in the same way.’

‘There’s been an element of power exchange between you both almost since the beginning.’

‘...What?’

Pitch laughed, pressed his lips to the side of Jack’s head.

‘You know,’ Jack said, ‘I know you’re like a rehabilitated villain or whatever, but this whole ‘I knew all along stuff you’re only just realising now’ makes you seem a bit less rehabilitated and a bit more *premeditated* villain or whatever. Just saying.’

‘Now, Jack,’ Pitch said, sighing, ‘why say it like that, when you can just say: ‘Pitch, sometimes you’re *quite* scary.’”

‘Okay, fair,’ Jack said, laughing.

‘In all seriousness, do you really think it was normal for him to offer that *you* take charge of training? I know he was doing it, in part, so you could learn to embrace it – but he also took to it

well. He's always lent you power in places where I suspect he wouldn't ever contemplate giving it to someone else. And I don't think it's because he finds you non-threatening. I think he finds you quite threatening.'

'Me,' Jack scoffed. But even as he said it, he knew it was true. 'Yeah, I kinda see that. I just thought- Honestly I just thought he felt guilty for treating me like crap sometimes, and so made all these concessions. But if it was never just that... Oh man.'

Jack covered his face with his hands, and Pitch took one of them and entwined his fingers with Jack's, stroking his palm. It was warm, good, and Jack closed his eyes and tried to focus on that instead.

'This is hard,' Jack said.

Pitch laughed. 'Oh no, you have responsibility for someone else's welfare, whatever shall you do?'

'I have responsibility for *your*- No, it's not the same. Even I know it's not the same.'

They fell silent. It was exciting, thinking about it, but difficult too. He wasn't used to contemplating someone else like this. Wondering how they'd react to different things, planning *ahead*. His centre meant he had the freedom to do that now, to explore it and see what it felt like. He'd enjoyed it too. Coming to a decision when Gwyn hadn't seemed to know what to do, following through, finding out that Gwyn would let him. Seemed happier when Jack was making the decisions.

*So that's the world we live in now. Okay.*

'But he's the King!' Jack exclaimed.

'Perhaps that is the very thing he tells himself, and perhaps this is the thing that others have told him, and perhaps this is why he's so caged about this side of himself. Before being King, I'm not sure how a submissive War General would have been received. Your incredulity likely reflects an attitude he could have been encountering for thousands of years.'

*Well, geez. When you put it like that...*

Jack sighed. Pitch was right. He'd have to quieten that part of his mind somehow. The part that said Kings who were built like that and wore armour didn't get to submit, that there was a natural order to things, and this whole thing somehow broke it.

'Okay,' Jack said, nodding to himself. 'I'm kind of getting why you didn't dump all of this on me earlier.'

'What do you think of? When you think of his submission?' Pitch asked gently. Then Pitch's mouth pressed to his palm, and Jack shivered.

*Oh.*

'Uh, well. Last time. And you said you were going to fuck him, and then you did, and I got to see the way he looked and sounded through that, and it was just... *I want to do that. I used to wonder what you got out of it sometimes, when it seemed so imbalanced. Like, you tie me up, you do all this stuff, you put so much of yourself into it, and then all I can do sometimes is just...*'

'...Take it,' Pitch said, and Jack sagged back into the armchair.

‘And like, I know you tell me that’s not uneven but sometimes- But then I saw that with Gwyn and I think I get it now,’ Jack said, his voice shakier. It wasn’t fair that after all this time, Pitch could reduce him to this with a handful of words. And a mouth on his palm. His fingers curled and brushed against Pitch’s skin. ‘Is it bad that I don’t want that from you?’

‘No,’ Pitch said. ‘What we want from each other fits together perfectly, and if it ever changes, it will be perfect then, too.’

‘What if he hates it?’

‘I doubt that,’ Pitch said. ‘Very much. But if he does, you’ll talk about it.’

‘What if he freaks out?’

‘We’ll talk about that,’ Pitch said. ‘I’d like to take you through some things before you see him again, so you’re more prepared.’

Jack nodded, relieved, and then his eyes flew wide again.

‘What if I’m too cold for him?’ Jack exclaimed. ‘I mean- You know-’

‘You’re not.’

‘Are you sure?’

‘You can always get him to warm up your fingers for you.’

‘How?’ Jack said, envisioning a totally uncool scenario where he needed to boil a kettle first and then wait for the water to go lukewarm and he supposed he could just run the *tap*, but...*still*.

‘Put them in his mouth,’ Pitch said, breath hot against Jack’s palm. Then, he was shifting and two of Jack’s fingers slid into Pitch’s mouth. Into all of that heat. He could feel the texture of Pitch’s tongue beneath his fingers, could feel the warmth of it seeping into his joints and running along his palm and wrist.

‘Oh,’ Jack managed.

‘You can do the same with that perfect cock of yours,’ Pitch added when he withdrew, and Jack nodded, because it seemed pretty obvious now, but also it was getting hard to think.

‘Oh my god,’ Jack said.

‘He won’t be like you,’ Pitch said, amused, gazing at him affectionately.

‘Like me how?’ Jack said, laughing weakly. ‘What, *easy*? You call me a brat so often I’m starting to think you’re so old you’ve just forgotten what my real name is. Come on, Pitch, tell me all these things you know that you just want me to find out on my own. I don’t want to play some kind of cryptic crossword in this. I hate those things.’

‘Oh, I’ll help,’ Pitch said, running his fingers along Jack’s thigh possessively.

‘Real help,’ Jack warned. ‘Not the kind that involves you dragging me off to bed for a whole night.’

‘One learns best by doing, Jack,’ Pitch said, dragging Jack fully into his lap. ‘One learns best by *doing*.’

\*

A month later, Gwyn sat in the kitchen in Kostroma, and Jack thought about Pitch who was off visiting Toothiana. They did ‘friend things’ according to Toothiana, though Pitch described it more eloquently as: ‘I repeatedly dissuade her from checking my teeth and then she talks a very great deal about everything. Actually I quite like it, but *please* don’t tell her.’ Jack knew he’d be nervous, but there was a part of him that wanted to laugh hysterically at the idea that he and Gwyn were going to be doing this on their own.

If there was any *this* at all.

They’d made the world’s most awkward small-talk. Gwyn had brought *another* gift – this time a bottle of ink for fountain pens, that looked like it was made of the night sky when Jack held it up to the light. And now Gwyn sat with a glass of water in front of him, and he looked like someone who didn’t understand how he managed to be in the position he was in.

*Lost*, Jack’s mind supplied helpfully. *He just looks so out of his element.*

‘Do you not just visit people? Sit in their kitchens? That kind of thing?’ Jack said.

‘I do,’ Gwyn said, looking at Jack, lips lifting in a half-smile. ‘But usually when it’s happening, I’m doing it in capacity as King and War General, and I have a- There is a way I need to be, and though I’m sure you’d never guess, I’m actually capable of making conversation and so on.’ Gwyn sipped at the water and then stared down at the glass. ‘But I thought you wouldn’t want that... aspect of me.’

‘The lie,’ Jack said. ‘How much of it is a lie?’

‘I am King,’ Gwyn said soberly. ‘And I am War General.’

Jack thought of Pitch saying that Gwyn was both. Raw and vulnerable, but also King and the one who killed people and commanded the entire Seelie Court. Jack remembered what it was like, seeing him directing fae in North’s Workshop. Remembered blood spatters on his armour and the exhaustion he carried with him, and the strength that shone through that.

‘But you’re not used to this,’ Jack said.

‘Is it so obvious?’ Gwyn said, and Jack was shocked at the depth of bitterness he heard.

‘It’s okay,’ Jack said. ‘You’ll get better at it with practice.’

Jack hopped onto the table next to Gwyn and sat on the edge of it, resting his staff by his side and swinging his legs and staring at Gwyn thoughtfully.

‘Do you want to know what I have planned for you? Or do you want to just see what happens?’ Jack said.

Gwyn blinked, and then stared at Jack without saying anything at all. Pitch had said Jack could pre-negotiate everything with Gwyn, which might make it easier for them both. But Jack had a feeling – even now – that Gwyn wouldn’t go for it.

‘I kind of just wanna see what happens,’ Jack said. ‘I mean you have a safeword. I don’t want to just toss you off into the deep end anyway.’

Which wasn’t *entirely* true. But Jack could save that for next time. If things went well this time.

‘Are you sure?’ Gwyn said, raising an eyebrow. ‘This seems like the deep end. Are you certain that Pitch is all right with this?’

‘Yeah,’ Jack said. ‘But are you? I can get him.’

‘No,’ Gwyn said, and then sighed. ‘Can we just get this over and done with?’

Jack laughed, unable to help himself. It wasn’t even funny, but anyone would think Gwyn was being asked to go to the gallows. Jack was pretty sure he knew what hid behind that resistance.

‘Stand up,’ Jack said.

He didn’t bother trying to be all sultry and commanding like Pitch. That was never going to work. And he saw the moment when Gwyn wasn’t going to do what he said. Gwyn just leaned back in his chair and folded his arms, staring at Jack as if to say: *You’re not strong enough to make me, so I won’t.*

Pitch had predicted this. In the weeks leading up to this visit, Pitch had explained more of his thoughts about Gwyn than ever before. He strung together a tapestry of threads he’d picked up, and from there, made suggestions. Jack had a few of his own, too. It turned out that when he was given room to think about what he wanted to do to Gwyn, he actually had a *lot* of ideas. Which was weird. After so long letting Pitch be the one to come up with the things they generally did in the bedroom, he could feel this side of himself budding forward like a new, strange plant. It was young and unpracticed, and yet he’d spent so much time with Pitch, he’d clearly developed some kind of instinct towards taking charge of someone else.

The first thing they’d both realised, was that Jack’s style wasn’t Pitch’s style. Jack couldn’t physically overpower Gwyn, and his strength wasn’t in just telling people what to do.

*Okay, here goes.*

‘Please?’ Jack said, smiling at him. ‘I mean, do you want to try this or not? You know I can’t make you do anything. I’m just asking you to stand. I’d really like it if you did.’

The stubbornness on Gwyn’s face shifted, expressions shifting quickly, from confusion and uncertainty, to something that could have been anger, to a blankness that was clearly a mask, and finally as though being asked to do something laborious, Gwyn heaved a sigh and stood, arms folded.

Jack couldn’t stop the smile on his face, because no matter how much Gwyn put up a fuss about it. He’d still *done* it.

‘Thank you,’ Jack said.

Gwyn rolled his eyes.

It was already *fun*. They’d gone from straight up awkwardness, to a playfulness that Jack could feel in his chest. One he’d have to keep a tight leash on. This wasn’t just about taking control of someone else, but self-control. Pitch had emphasised that. If you couldn’t keep control of yourself, you didn’t deserve to have control over anyone else.

Learning about how very seriously Pitch took everything he did with Jack was eye-opening. Like seeing an entirely new layer of love and respect that he’d felt and experienced, but never quite understood.

Jack slid off the table and walked the short distance to Gwyn, looking up at him. Height difference was fine. Jack could change that if he wanted to anyway. It was easy to hop into the winds.

For now, he lifted a hand and placed it just above Gwyn's hip. Gwyn didn't shift at all, but Jack didn't really mind. The fabric of Gwyn's shirt felt like linen, and it was surprisingly coarse. Wasn't it scratchy? Jack slipped his fingers beneath and felt heat clinging to his fingers, all that body warmth.

He looked up, but Gwyn wasn't looking down at him.

So he focused on Gwyn, on information gathering. Touching without any real aim. He stroked his hand up Gwyn's flank, felt ridges of muscle and a thin layer of fat over that. He felt the moment that Gwyn's skin texture changed – goosebumps – even though Gwyn hadn't moved.

His fingers coasted past Gwyn's navel, and his belly twitched in response. His other hand came up and rested at Gwyn's other hip for a few seconds, before slipping beneath his shirt.

'It's really obvious you train,' Jack said, belatedly.

A sharp exhale, and then Gwyn laughed, the sound almost surprised.

'Of course I train.'

'Yeah but you wear it really *well*,' Jack said.

He could hear Gwyn swallowing, remembered Gwyn saying last time that the fae didn't really find him attractive. Which was bizarre. But the short time he'd been in the fae realm, he'd not seen anyone as muscular as Gwyn. Everyone was lean or svelte or wiry or just thin. Even the taller ones.

*He'll respond to praise*, Pitch had said. *But be careful with it. Watch his responses.*

That was something that Jack knew all too well. It was something Pitch could have just as easily said about Jack.

'Could you unfold your arms for me?' Jack said.

Gwyn did, letting his arms drop by his sides.

Jack hopped up into the air and moved his hands higher beneath Gwyn's shirt, reaching pectorals, fingers just shy of nipples. He looked at Gwyn's face – both of them at eye level now – but Gwyn was looking somewhere past him. Deciding whether he still wanted to go through with it? Jack didn't know.

'Can you open your mouth?' Jack said. 'Just a little?'

Gwyn's eyes flickered to Jack's, and his mouth stayed closed. A muscle slid in his jaw.

'Just a little,' Jack said, his voice hushed. 'Do you want me to help?'

He lifted his hand and brushed Gwyn's lips, feeling them warm and slightly chapped beneath his skin. Jack moved his fingertips slowly back and forth, until Gwyn's lips naturally parted, and Jack smiled.

'Awesome,' he said.

Then he pressed his mouth to Gwyn's, and kissed him. Lingering at first, waiting for the moment

when Gwyn would respond. He could feel Gwyn holding himself back, and kept his lips coaxing and light. When Gwyn went to kiss back, Jack withdrew and rubbed his thumb at the side of Gwyn's mouth, still moving his other hand over Gwyn's chest, up over his sternum now, feeling Gwyn's heart pounding beneath his skin.

'Kiss me,' Jack said, his voice lower than before. Less of a sweet question now.

He was surprised when Gwyn did, and surprised again when Gwyn kept the kiss gentle. He expected Gwyn to take control back somehow. Pitch had warned him it could happen.

Jack's mouth was already warming, and his tongue moved carefully against Gwyn's mouth, and then slipped inside, pressing to Gwyn's tongue. Encouraging it to slide along his. Gwyn's breathing was more uneven now, and he could feel Gwyn's hands shifting at his sides, like he wasn't sure what to do with them.

'Put your hands on my waist,' Jack said against Gwyn's mouth, and then pressed his lips together when he felt Gwyn do just that. Fingers curling. 'Good.'

They continued kissing, and Jack thought he could do this for hours, but he also wanted to move things along. He wanted to prove to himself that he could do this, for as long as Gwyn let him.

So Jack slid the hand that had been at Gwyn's chest down, and cupped him through his pants.

Gwyn's breath held, caught in his throat, and Jack bit at his lower lip, concentrating hard on keeping his ice under control.

'Back up,' Jack said. 'Against the counter.'

When Gwyn didn't move straight away, Jack squeezed the generous handful he had, knowing that he was pushing into the realm of discomfort. Gwyn took a slight step backwards, and then he moved all at once, until his lower back bumped into the counter and Jack felt the shock of it as Gwyn's lips pressed hard into his.

'Good,' Jack said, thinking that this was way better than good, it was amazing. He leaned back, looked at the surprise on Gwyn's face. 'You okay?'

Gwyn stared at him, like he wasn't entirely sure who Jack was.

'Are you okay?' Jack said again, feeling his own heart knocking against his ribs. He had no idea how hard he could push, and Pitch had told him: *Check in often. Don't vanish inside whatever fantasy is in your mind, and don't let him do the same. You must remain present, and you must demand presence in turn.*

'I-' Gwyn said.

Jack kissed his jaw, kissed his way to Gwyn's chin, and kissed that too.

'Are you okay?' Jack said again.

'Yes,' Gwyn said. 'You don't have to ask.'

'Um, what?' Jack said, incredulous, leaning back and shaking his head. 'I don't think you're deciding that, right now.'

A flinty spark of something rebellious in Gwyn's eyes, and his lips thinned. Jack half-expected to

be pushed away, from the way Gwyn's hands tightened at his sides. But instead, Gwyn just locked himself up, and didn't move.

Jack couldn't help himself, he shifted his hand against Gwyn's cock, just to see that stubborn wall falter, before drawing back into place again.

*Okay, you can hide again for a little while.*

Jack settled for pressing his lips to the side of Gwyn's neck, feeling the tension there. He opened his mouth, licked across warm skin, and then blew a tiny amount of frost over it. Gwyn squirmed, and Jack licked the frost away, before pressing his mouth to the pulse point beneath Gwyn's ear. He was sure Pitch would be able to read precise mood or something by measuring Gwyn's pulse, but all Jack could tell was that it was fast, and like, he could already *tell* Gwyn was freaked out. Not everyone could be a living pulse monitor.

So Jack coasted up to Gwyn's ear and licked over it, and felt all the muscles in Gwyn's body shifting and tensing.

His arm was stretched all the way down, but he wasn't willing to give up the grip he had. It wasn't tight, but he found he liked the ownership of it. He massaged with his fingers, and he could tell Gwyn's mouth had opened by the way his breathing changed.

'Is this like the deep end?' Jack said into Gwyn's ear.

Gwyn cleared his throat, said nothing.

'You're not super talkative,' Jack added.

'I'm quite sure- I'm quite certain you talk enough for two,' Gwyn said.

'Rude,' Jack said, looking down at his hand between Gwyn's legs. He moved, slipping between the hem of Gwyn's pants and skin, feeling the helpless twitches.

Spending so much time with Pitch had made him lose a lot of his shyness around other people's bodies. Especially now that he'd seen Gwyn naked before. The moment he made contact with Gwyn's cock, Gwyn jerked backwards and then made a sound that was almost a laugh.

'You're *cold*,' Gwyn said, more a petulant accusation than anything else. He still didn't move Jack's hand away.

*God, he really does just let me. This is crazy.*

'Okay,' Jack said. 'I mean I'm called Jack *Frost*.'

Gwyn stared at Jack, and this close, Jack marvelled at how pale Gwyn's eyes were. Much paler than Jack's. Like the first blush as an iceberg started to gain colour. Jack knew – he'd seen them all his life.

But in Jack's fingers, he was all heat, and nothing like an iceberg at all.

'Hi,' Jack said. 'Hey, it's just occurred to me – you go commando? Like all the time? Or was that a today thing?'

'Commando?' Gwyn said. 'Like the military?'

'No,' Jack said. 'Like...no underwear.'



Gwyn blinked at him, and then shrugged. 'I don't see the point.'

'Me either,' Jack grinned.

Jack pressed his lips to Gwyn's, not bothering with something gentle now. His fingers tightened around Gwyn's length and he moved his hand slowly. It was cramped, and he didn't want to be rough, even though Pitch had said it would be fine.

*His pain tolerance will be immense. I suspect he's at the very least a masochist,* Pitch had said.

*I don't want- I don't want that to be the focus,* Jack had replied.

Pitch had only smiled and said: *I know. I have some ideas.*

Now, though, Jack wasn't thinking about the ideas. He was fascinated with the way Gwyn just stayed there, locked up, but a faint tremble passed through him, and then another, and Jack kept his lips pressed to Gwyn's and *felt* all the ways his breathing wasn't even or easy. He kept his hand moving, then groaned in appreciation when Gwyn started kissing him back.

Not the tender things of before, but hungry, open-mouthed kisses. One of Gwyn's hands gripped hard at Jack's waist, the other braced against the counter. And Gwyn was so hard in his hand, already, and they'd hardly done anything at all. He dared to imagine that maybe Gwyn had been wary about all of this, but wanting it too. Had he thought about it before he'd visited? Had he stroked himself and imagined how it would be?

Gwyn's kisses took on a desperate edge, even as Jack kept his hand moving at the same, slow pace. Teeth grazed at Jack's lip, and Jack could feel the coiled up force of it, his own breathing turning rough.

'Hey,' Jack said, leaning back and having to turn his head to make sure he could keep talking, Gwyn's lips seeking his. 'You want to take this to the bed-?'

Jack's eyes widened in shock as light enveloped them immediately. Then, in one of the fastest teleportations he'd undergone, he blinked to find himself pushed back into one of the posts of Pitch's four-poster bed.

Gwyn's hand held him in place, his mouth *claiming*, and Jack realised there had come a moment where he'd lost whatever control he'd found, and he was surprised to realise how much he didn't want to run with it. This wasn't Gwyn's show. It was *his*.

'Stop,' Jack said, his voice quiet, the command clear.

Gwyn's lips rubbed across Jack's mouth, and then dragged across his cheek, and then finally Gwyn turned his own head and panted. Shaking.

'I'm sorry,' Gwyn said, sounding like he'd had to fight with himself to even form the words.

'I'm not,' Jack said. 'But drop your hand.'

The hand at Jack's waist fell away, but Jack felt the backs of Gwyn's fingertips, like he'd struggled to let go of that point of contact.

Jack's hand was still on Gwyn's cock, though he'd stopped moving it. He could feel tiny jerks at Gwyn's hips, like he just wanted to rut, was having to fight against himself.

God, Jack thought, feeling sucker-punched from the strength of the clench in his gut. But he *liked* that. A *lot*.

‘You’re not in charge of this,’ Jack said, prodding.

‘I- I know,’ Gwyn said. ‘I forgot.’

‘You stopped when I said though, that’s good. That was really good.’

Gwyn stared at him in disbelief. As though he couldn’t believe he was being praised for stopping. But Jack had a moment where he wasn’t certain. Where he didn’t know how much he’d get through to Gwyn. Only now could he really look at it, realise how alarmed he’d been. Of course he would’ve been able to stop things, he had all of that ice at his disposal after all. But it wasn’t like he *wanted* this to end like *that*. He could only imagine how that story would go down with Pitch.

*Oh, yeah, so like, I tried to do the hot dominating thing that you do, but it ended up with Gwyn as an icicle. Get me a hairdryer or something so I can thaw him out.*

‘You should get naked,’ Jack said, now leaning against the bedpost, where Gwyn had pushed him.

Gwyn stepped back, and then again, and he looked around the room in confusion. A part of Jack wanted to make it all easier, but there was a part of him that wanted to keep pushing. Gwyn was still tenting his pants, after all.

A pause, and then Gwyn took off his shirt with one hand. One of those effortless moves where he grabbed the front and pulled up, like in an advertisement or something. He let his shirt drop to the floor, and then worked at the fastening of his pants, still looking around the room. Jack’s breathing sped up, tempted to touch himself, but also enjoying making himself wait. Turned out it was far easier to make himself wait if someone wasn’t telling him to, and he was doing it all under his own steam.

‘Do you just not like clothes?’ Jack said, when Gwyn stepped out of his pants. He hadn’t even worn *shoes*. ‘Like, shirt and pants, and that’s it?’

‘Oh, I apologise, should I have worn royal vestiture?’ Gwyn said, eyes flashing back to Jack. ‘How many layers should there have been?’

‘Geez,’ Jack said, swinging away from the bedpost and stepping forward. ‘I don’t even know what vestiture *means*. Is that like a robe or something?’

Jack could hear the sound of Gwyn swallowing, as Jack made a slow circuit around Gwyn’s body, looking at *all* of him. He paused at his back, staring at the dip his spine made, at the muscles that lay over his broad shoulders. And then his eyes found something small and pale, and he touched a finger to it.

Gwyn jerked.

‘Does it hurt?’ Jack said, peering at the scar. It was neat, yet felt weird.

*If you’re Court or higher, the only way you can scar is through magical means.* That’s what Gwyn had said last time. He hadn’t contradicted Jack when Jack had said Gwyn had no scars. Yet here he was, and he had one. It didn’t look recent. It didn’t feel new.

‘It doesn’t hurt,’ Gwyn said. But it was *something*. A bad memory maybe. Jack shifted his fingers so that he was bracketing it and no longer touching it directly.

He didn't like it. At first it had been weird that Gwyn was so unmarred, and now here was a neat little scar, and Gwyn was *born* Court status, so someone had...done something. Jack wanted to ask, but he knew it wouldn't lead to anything at all. Could tell from the way Gwyn's breathing had gone very even.

So Jack pressed his lips to it, instead.

A faint sound in the room, and Jack thought it was a lot like the sounds he used to make when Pitch would find his scars and touch them, or kiss them.

*Oh no, I have his thing for scars. Oh no. Thanks Pitch. Thanks.*

He kissed his way to Gwyn's spine, and then reached up and dug his fingers into the tops of Gwyn's shoulders and dragged them down. No nails – not yet – but a blunt pressure. He could feel some of the tension falling away then, and so he repeated the motion. Each time, he ended with his fingers just at the rise of Gwyn's ass.

Would it be wrong of him to think that he wanted to *own* it? Maybe he just wouldn't say that out loud. He was pretty sure it wouldn't be that hard to set Gwyn running. He was being cooperative so far, at least to a point, but Jack could feel resistance all the way through him. Pitch was right. It wasn't easy. It was like a game, tug a thread that was loose somewhere, watch to see which ones would go tense in response, and make sure none of them broke.

At least, none of the ones that led to bad things.

Jack scraped his nails down Gwyn's shoulders, down his back, and Gwyn sighed then, his head dropped forwards. So Jack did it again, raising red lines, and then again, watching the skin flush even whiter before the blood returned.

Instead of curving his hands down Gwyn's ass, he moved to the sides of his hips, moved down his outer thighs, the backs of his thighs. It was like a full body stretch.

When he moved his palms back up, he cupped Gwyn's ass, and it seemed to take Gwyn a few seconds to realise what Jack was doing. Then all at once he stiffened, and started to step forwards, and Jack grabbed his wrist.

'Wait,' Jack said. 'Just wait a bit. I'm not doing anything.'

'Is it meant to feel like I'm livestock being looked over by a farmer?' Gwyn bit out.

'Yeah, kinda,' Jack said, laughing.

Amazingly, Gwyn relaxed a little, stepped back into position.

*Inspection, Pitch had said. Observe him, walk around him, stay behind him for periods of time. You don't have the advantage of height or breadth, but it doesn't matter. That's never mattered. It's like a dance. You want him on the back foot, worried that he may fall. Then, you show him that you will be there when he does.*

'I have no idea why I'm going along with this,' Gwyn said.

Jack leaned forward, pressed his length against Gwyn's back, and then reached around with his other hand and found his cock, still hard.

'Really?' Jack said. 'Like none? At all?'

‘Anyone could- I- That’s’-’

‘Uh huh,’ Jack said, wrapping his hand around Gwyn’s cock – not fully, he couldn’t get his whole hand around it, which was *ridiculous*. ‘You’re going along with this because you like me so much.’

It was a risk, and he expected the tension that followed. But Jack began moving his hand along Gwyn’s length, even though he had to stretch to do it, even though he couldn’t *see* what he was doing.

‘So how’s your day been, anyway?’ Jack said. ‘Did you think about this?’

‘What?’ Gwyn said, sounding stunned. Jack mentally patted himself on the back, and kept moving his hand. The other still holding onto Gwyn’s forearm, the grip tight, an illusion of holding him in place.

‘You know, your day? Everything before you got here?’

‘I’m- You want me to talk about *that*?’

Gwyn looked down, and Jack guessed he must have been looking at his cock, Jack’s hand moving on it. Because he didn’t look away, and Jack grinned and squeezed the tip of Gwyn’s cock. Harder than he’d like it himself, and Gwyn jerked and then made another one of those faint sounds.

‘Come on,’ Jack said. ‘You can’t have forgotten how to talk *yet*.’

‘My day was fine,’ Gwyn said quickly. ‘Fine. Yours?’

‘You can do better than that.’

‘Busy but fine,’ Gwyn added.

Jack pressed his lips together to stop himself from laughing. Despite worrying whether or not he was getting it right, this was good. Gwyn flustered and shifting minutely in Jack’s grip, and sounding impatient, and Jack knowing that he wasn’t done yet. Not even close to done.

‘Actual sentences with more than four words in them. Give it a try.’

‘*Jack*,’ Gwyn said.

‘Oh, all right then, I guess,’ Jack said, slowing down on Gwyn’s cock, and then stopping at the base of him, keeping his fingers tight.

He could almost feel the outrage that followed that. Heard the slow breath in, the slow breath out. Jack tightened his hand on Gwyn’s forearm, let some frost curl around the skin, and drank in the hiss that followed.

‘You can’t...’ Gwyn said then. ‘You can’t be serious.’

‘I don’t know if you’ve met me,’ Jack said, ‘but I don’t really go in for that whole ‘serious’ vibe. Kids hate it. I mean they like it *sometimes*, but-’

‘Jack!’ Gwyn exclaimed, even commanded.

‘Yeah?’ Jack said.

It was almost like Pitch was in the room there with them, he’d given Jack so much advice. But this

was one of Pitch's earlier tricks, when he encouraged Jack to talk more freely during sex. In the beginning though, Jack was pretty sure that Pitch had just delighted in watching Jack floundering, in those moments where he tried to find sentences while it was hard to think.

'Move your hand,' Gwyn said.

'What?' Jack said. 'Like, you thinking you're giving orders? Cute.'

An actual growl. An honest to god *growl*. Jack was going to tell Pitch all about this later. But especially the moment where he felt that growl against his own body, through his clothing, through the arm wrapped around Gwyn's side.

'Also cute,' Jack said.

Gwyn stepped forwards then, and Jack followed, squeezing Gwyn's cock hard enough that Gwyn froze mid-step.

The tension in the room rose. One of Gwyn's hands came and tentatively rested on Jack's wrist, and Jack wondered if he was about to be pulled off. Waited for a word that would end everything. Almost held his breath. Instead, he focused on Pitch's advice, and kept his breathing as even as possible.

'It's not that hard to tell me about your day,' Jack said into the silence. 'I'll be gentle.'

'This,' Gwyn said. '*This* is what you want?'

'It's a start,' Jack said. 'You only have to try.'

He felt the deep breath, and knew Gwyn was gearing up to argue back. Almost heard the words: '*I am the King*' reverberating around them. Felt them, somehow, all the way in his bones. He wasn't fae, exactly, and he wasn't a spirit, exactly, and he definitely wasn't human anymore...sort of. But he was something that sensed magic and energy, that in that moment, felt how the authority in the room fought and shifted.

'You can just try it,' Jack whispered.

'Gods,' Gwyn said, sounding exasperated and maybe a little desperate too. He was still hard in Jack's grip. 'Fine. What did you want to know about my day? I did- It was...'

Jack started moving his hand again, and Gwyn took several fast, silent breaths and then said:

'Oh.'

'More,' Jack said.

'There was a land dispute,' Gwyn said, his voice not quite shaking. 'I- Annoying. They want to war. I'm trying to talk them out of it. But they *want* it, and they think I'll condone it.'

'They ask you permission before going to war?' Jack said, genuinely curious. He rubbed the frost off Gwyn's wrist with his other hand. Reached up and stroked the inside of his elbow. Gwyn groaned, his hips moving slightly into Jack's other hand.

'No- They... Well, *yes*. But more so I'll pick a side. Whichever side I pick, it will be something of a triumph, since the other side- they can't win against me. They just want...a political ally.'

'But you don't want it,' Jack said.

'I just *said*-' Gwyn cleared his throat, and then lifted his free arm up and covered his face. Jack wanted to see his expression badly, but it could wait. Pitch had said gesture was important too. Tone of voice. The sound of someone's breathing.

Jack slowed his hand in warning, and Gwyn hissed.

'No, I don't,' Gwyn said roughly. 'I don't want it.'

'Did you think about visiting me?'

'I tried not to,' Gwyn said, and then his shoulders rose and fell on the start of a laugh that was swallowed quickly. Jack rewarded the frankness by speeding up his hand, and the groan that followed was enough to make Jack's cock twitch.

'You tried?' Jack said.

'I didn't think it would work. I didn't think this would work,' Gwyn said, after a beat where he was catching his breath. 'I'm still not sure- And yet...here we are.'

'Like, here's me jerking you off, and there's you just...I dunno, are you pulling your hair out?'

'No,' Gwyn said. But he dropped his hand, all the same.

'I thought about it,' Jack said, knowing that the challenge was rewarding honesty with honesty. An even exchange. 'A lot. I worried you'd make fun of me.'

Jack's hand moving faster now, and Gwyn hunching forwards, as though curling towards the sensation that Jack was wringing out of him.

'I worried you wouldn't listen at all,' Jack said, biting the inside of his lip and closing his eyes, because that was so far from what had happened. Because this yielding was so good. 'And I worried you would just let me do everything, and make me think I was in control, and then patronise me about it later. Like, you'd say, 'Jack, of course I *let* you think...' Whatever. Something like that.'

'*Jack*,' Gwyn gasped. His voice strained. His arm corded tight where Jack still stroked his inner elbow, the side of his arm.

'Feeling it?' Jack said.

'I'm...'

'Close,' Jack finished, but he knew, he could feel it. Gwyn's free arm twisted back and found Jack's hip, grasping it. Like he needed something to hang onto.

Jack pressed his forehead to Gwyn's back and squeezed down on the head of Gwyn's cock, and Gwyn made a sharp sound like it hurt. Maybe it did. But his cock twitched all the same, and he shuddered.

'I'm not as worried now,' Jack said into Gwyn's back. 'Having you in the palm of my hand like this. Not actually that worried at all.'

'Gods,' Gwyn gasped. '*Jack*-'

'I think you're gonna be saying my name like that a lot more before I'm done with you,' Jack said, breathless, hungry, and suddenly possessed with a dark need to push Gwyn over that edge. Just as

Pitch had done last time, when Jack had seen it, and had felt that revelation swell inside of him, as it did now.

Gwyn groaned, and Jack began squeezing the head of Gwyn's cock regularly on the upstroke, and felt the moment when he knew that was it. He *had* him. Gwyn's hand almost clawing at Jack's side, knees locking, and Jack thought this probably wasn't very fair, making Gwyn stand. But he didn't want to be exactly *fair*, either.

'Whenever you want, yeah?' Jack said, pressing his lips to the sheen of sweat on Gwyn's skin. He tasted like ozone, like flying at speed up towards the very edges of the atmosphere, where everything changed and it was too cold for even him.

He passed his thumb across the slit of Gwyn's cock, pressed down, and Gwyn jolted, whimpered.

Either Gwyn was resisting coming, or it wasn't enough yet. Jack could feel how close he was, and thought quickly. He let go of Gwyn's arm and reached around, almost embracing Gwyn from behind now. He nearly grasped Gwyn's cock with both hands, but instead, trusting his instincts, he kept one hand working quickly on Gwyn's cock, and with the other, he pressed his fingertips into Gwyn's chest and scratched down.

Jack winced as Gwyn's hand tightened on his hip painfully, but rode it out, because his instincts had been spot on. He felt it – the muscle twitches in Gwyn's cock, and then come moving beneath Jack's palm, pulsing out onto the floor in front of them. Gwyn bent over and gasped, and Jack kept his hand moving, wishing he could see it all, but also plenty turned on from feeling it through Gwyn's body, his back to Jack's chest, shaking in Jack's hands.

Jack kept his hand moving until Gwyn's arm fumbled away from Jack's hip to his forearm, tugging lightly. And then Jack kept going for a few seconds longer, until the tugs became desperate, and Gwyn's breathing strained.

Then, Jack's hand – wet and warm with come – smeared across Gwyn's belly.

*There. Just a little bit, just today, I own you.*

Jack couldn't help himself, he moved quickly, jumping up into the air and moving around Gwyn's body. Clutching Gwyn's hair and holding him in place, pressing his lips hard to Gwyn's. Drinking down the weak moan that followed and rocking his hips into Gwyn's body, because the friction felt so good.

Then, one hand on Gwyn's shoulder, the other still in his hair, he moved back to look at him. To finally see his face properly.

Gwyn's skin was flushed. His eyes, when they opened, looked dazed. Found Jack's expression and stayed there, shocked. His hair was a tousled mess. His lips were wet.

'You're so pretty,' Jack said.

Gwyn's eyes widened, and then his eyebrows lifted.

'Pretty,' Gwyn said, like he'd never heard the word in his life.

'Yeah,' Jack said, rubbing at Gwyn's scalp. 'So are you okay to keep going? Or are you about done?'

'I...I could keep going,' Gwyn said. 'I'd be a poor guest to leave my host so unsatisfied.'

‘Oh my god,’ Jack laughed. ‘The way you talk. But actually it’s the other way around. I’d be a poor host to not get you off at least one more time. I mean you’re still able to *stand*. So I’m clearly not doing my job.’

‘Ah,’ Gwyn said.

He looked a little lost, still. But he stared at Jack with a painful intensity. And Jack thought of Pitch telling him to be careful, telling him to take a breath after a peak. To *think*. So Jack watched Gwyn and calmed his breathing, and brought himself moments by bringing his hand down to curl at the back of Gwyn’s neck and stroke the hairline, where sweat had made his hair damp. Gwyn’s eyelids fluttered, and then he looked down. Like eye contact was too hard.

‘Are you okay?’ Jack said, wondering if he was breaking the spell by asking.

‘Yes,’ Gwyn said.

No push back. No rebellion. Just a quiet affirmation. Jack closed his eyes in relief.

‘You’d probably be happier on the bed though, right?’ Jack said, and Gwyn looked up, lips quirking.

‘I’d be happier if you were wearing less clothing.’

‘Good call,’ Jack said, moving back and grasping Gwyn’s hand, pulling gently. ‘How about both?’

A hesitation, but then Gwyn stepped forwards, and Jack wondered at the marvel of it – holding all this power in his grasp and vowing to be careful. He thought of Pitch with a new tenderness he’d never discovered before. An appreciation for this role, for what it entailed, for everything Pitch gave to him. And there, growing alongside it, something growing forth in his chest for Gwyn too. A space that didn’t erode or remove any of his love for Pitch. New and old all at once.

He wished he had a way of telling Gwyn that the stakes were high for both of them. But instead he would show him – that this wasn’t a game, and it mattered more than he’d first realised. If he found the balance, struck across on the right path, he’d leave them both bigger somehow at the end of this. Maybe Gwyn wouldn’t be happy, maybe Jack would mess up, but Jack was determined to make sure that Gwyn left knowing that there was space for him in Jack’s heart.



## Chapter 5

### Chapter Notes

Okay, the last chapter of this little AU for a while! I hope you enjoy it. :)

Jack sat on the bed, naked, amazed at how much more Gwyn had relaxed when Jack had stripped off too. But then, maybe it wasn't just the mutual nakedness. Maybe it was also that Jack had given him a handjob. That tended to relax a lot of people.

It was strange, but he wasn't sure if he wanted Gwyn to be relaxed. Or at least, not *too* relaxed. Not yet.

'You're watching me,' Gwyn said. 'Like...'

'Like what?' Jack said, grinning at him. Gwyn who wasn't even on the bed yet, but standing by it. Sometimes his eyes would drift over Jack's body, and then move back to Jack's eyes like he wasn't sure he was allowed to look. Jack could tell him it was fine, would probably tell him at some point, but if both of them being naked had levelled the playing field, Jack was ready to tip the balance again.

*It's about control, and it's about power, Pitch had said. Most submissives crave control being taken from them for a little while, if it's safe. Some crave resisting it, and I think he falls into that category. Make no mistake, you'll need to become astute at learning the difference between an acceptable level of fear, and what is true resistance. You may see both.*

So Jack was ready to tip the balance *gently*. Whatever that meant.

'Like what?' Jack said again. 'How am I watching you?'

Gwyn's eyes flashed, and Jack leaned back on the bed, not caring that he was half-hard. Okay, caring a *bit*. He definitely wanted to do something about it later, but it could wait.

'Like I own you for the day?' Jack said, tilting his head.

Gwyn's cheeks coloured more than their post-orgasm flush. He looked down, shook his head, the sharp movements more frustration than anything else.

'Would you get on the bed already?' Jack said. 'Come on, you said you wanted to be a good guest. Look, I'm all neglected and stuff.'

It turned out that Jack was bratty when he was topping someone, too. He didn't mind that. Nor did he mind the sharp look that Gwyn gave him.

He especially didn't mind when it was followed by Gwyn getting onto the bed. Unlike Pitch, who sort of...slunk onto the bed like a huge panther, or Jack, who just kind of tumbled onto it and didn't even try to be sexy about it – Gwyn moved with power. Even when it was hesitant, it was still power. Jack's mouth went a little dry, watching the muscles shift in his shoulders and his waist. How did fae not find that hot? What was *wrong* with them?

*Everything. That's why you chose not to be a part of that stupid, ridiculous world. Everything is wrong with them. No wonder he's sad sometimes.*

Gwyn paused on all fours in front of Jack and stared at him.

'What do you want?' Gwyn said. 'Or is this the part where you have no plan?'

'Oh man,' Jack said. 'Are you talking back? That's *awesome*. I thought it was just going to be like stubborn eye rolls the entire time. And that look you get when you want to argue but you're not gonna argue but I can tell you kind of are even when you're not saying anything.'

Gwyn blinked at him, and Jack pushed up onto his knees and grabbed Gwyn's hair. It was nice to grab. Nice to hold him in place and nip gently at his bottom lip, to kiss him and take as long as he wanted. Gwyn's lips moved slowly against his, in no hurry, and Jack took more than he was being given. Made Gwyn's mouth open wider with his own, pressed his tongue deeper, less to seduce and more to dominate. All that heat felt amazing. Jack already knew that his body temperature was up, compared to before – a light feverish cast to his skin, as though someone had lit a roaring fire in the room.

'I still don't think you have a plan,' Gwyn said, when Jack pulled away.

'Maybe,' Jack said. 'I really like to improvise. Here, look, I'll do some improvising right now.'

Jack moved away and lay on his stomach, resting his head on his forearms.

'I want you to kiss my back,' Jack said. 'You can start with the scar that I basically got because you made me carry that sword up the mountain.'

Gwyn paused in the middle of shifting over Jack's body. His exhale was so forceful that Jack felt it against his skin. Jack thought about turning around, to check the look on Gwyn's face. He knew that was kind of a low blow. But then he bit the inside of his lower lip and decided to go with it.

He knew he was playing with the power dynamic between them, lying on his stomach like this, and Gwyn's arms on either side of him. He wondered if Gwyn was thinking of the last time, when he'd fucked Jack, because Jack was thinking about it. His gut clenched, remembering Pitch telling Gwyn to slow down, remembering all that power and force coiled so tight, Gwyn trying so hard to control himself.

Gwyn's breaths against the middle of his back first, and Jack almost told Gwyn to get a move on, before he felt wet heat over that slightly angled scar. Jack blinked to feel it, then tensed, wondered why he'd even *asked* for this. It was a surprise to feel a palm at his side, as though responding to his stiffness, checking that Jack was okay.

'I didn't know at the time,' Gwyn said. His lips brushed over Jack's skin, his voice humming through it. 'I should have. Heavy weapons can chafe so easily. But you never said a thing.'

'Yeah, well...y'know, travelling with the whole King of the Seelie and wanting to impress and... everything else,' Jack said. God, why did he think *this* was a good idea? He'd wanted to get to Gwyn somehow, and instead he was getting to himself.

'It's beautiful,' Gwyn said. 'Not- Not the scar. Though it too, in a way...'

Gwyn trailed a string of kisses down to the middle of Jack's back. The scar didn't go all the way down, and Jack knew it well now, because Pitch traced it all the time. With how pale the scar was, Jack sometimes wondered if it was like he carried the ghost of the sword with him, haunting them

all, somehow.

‘Beautiful,’ Jack said.

‘What you did for him,’ Gwyn said. ‘What you were willing to do. I’d never seen- Of course I’d seen moments of great heroism, all my life. But never- It was beautiful, that you did that for him. Does he understand it, now? I was given to understand he was angry for a time.’

Gwyn strayed, kissing the skin on either side of the scar, and then finding unmarked patches and raising gooseflesh from the tingling warmth of it. Jack kept getting distracted, even as the words tumbled around in his mind.

‘I think he gets it,’ Jack said. ‘I dunno, I still think there could’ve been another way.’

‘No,’ Gwyn said.

That was it. No elaboration or explanation, no reasoning, just frank disagreement followed by Gwyn trailing kisses up the centre of Jack’s spine, before scraping his teeth over the back of Jack’s neck. He didn’t seem as shy anymore, or even nervous. Perhaps it was that Jack was facing away from him, or had deliberately chosen a more vulnerable position, or maybe – by some miracle – Gwyn was just starting to settle into what was happening.

If this was what he was like when he relaxed into it, Jack thought it was amazing. It wasn’t until those kisses moved to Jack’s shoulders that he realised it had been some time since he’d thought: *But he’s the King*. It was a relief, in a way.

*How must it be for him, to not be reminded all the time?*

‘You taste like winter,’ Gwyn said. ‘I don’t understand how you’re not fae and yet are clearly *something*.’

‘Yeah, yeah,’ Jack said, smiling. Then he shivered as Gwyn’s hand stroked tentatively down his flank, and then more firmly the second time. Jack’s breath caught. It was tempting to just give it all up to Gwyn then, to see how he’d behave. Tempting, but not as much as all the other things Jack wanted.

Jack turned, and Gwyn pulled back a little, forehead furrowing.

‘That was cool,’ Jack said, on an instinct, and watched as those little creases vanished.

*God, was he worried he wasn’t doing well? Was that it?*

‘Really awesome,’ Jack said, pushing up and pressing his lips to Gwyn’s. Here, Gwyn tried to take back a gentler control, running his hands up Jack’s sides, grasping his shoulders, then squeezing. Jack smiled, but still reached up and pushed Gwyn’s hands away. When Gwyn’s arms dropped, Jack pressed closer, touching his own cool fingers to Gwyn’s belly and feeling the muscles jump. He stroked softly, and then pressed a little, to feel the hardness and strength. Gwyn was nothing like human body builders, or gym junkies. It was muscle to a purpose, and Jack realised he’d not seen builds like Gwyn’s for decades. People didn’t really fight with swords anymore, and Jack hadn’t been to any Renaissance Faires recently to see the few remaining who did.

Jack looked down and pressed his lips to the dip between two collarbones.

‘How do other fae not like this?’

'Hmm, what?' Gwyn said. 'What don't they like?'

'The way you *look*,' Jack said.

'Oh,' Gwyn said, and tensed under Jack's hands. 'It's crude. At my status, I can wield a sword no matter how I look. It's...excessive. Only underfae need a musculature like this to support what they want to do.'

'Wait, so it's like a *class* thing?' Jack said, staring at Gwyn. 'You look lower class, therefore, not hot?'

'Yes?' Gwyn said, as though he wasn't sure that was the right answer. Then he smiled a little, and shrugged. 'I was a rebellious child. And then my military got used to it. And then it became the characteristic by which everyone knew who I was on the battlefield.'

'So like a personal brand, basically,' Jack said. 'But doesn't it bother you that like...people judge you for it? What about in relationships?'

Gwyn stared at Jack like he was a creature he'd never met before. He took a breath as though to answer, but no words came. Then finally he just looked aside.

'Jack, I have no time or inclination for such things. I'm not like you and Pitch. I am made to war, to both make them and win them. Do you think I dream of love?'

It was almost perfectly dismissive, except that Gwyn was here, on the bed, and Jack was still just touching him softly and deciding that he'd better not show that his heart was breaking or anything, because it seemed like Jack had his answer, even if the words were the opposite. If they kept down this road, talking, Gwyn would somehow convince himself he never should have been here in the first place, and Jack could tell Pitch the story of how he pushed Gwyn away, which wasn't what he was aiming for.

'Yeah, well,' Jack said, 'you're not gonna win this war. You should lie down. On your back. We'll make it that for now, you can always go to your stomach later.'

'It's novel, you ordering me around like this.'

But Gwyn still shifted, slid down onto his back, his head on the pillows. His hands rested at his sternum, and he looked at Jack like he was deigning to do this. Offering some huge favour, like Jack hadn't just pulled him apart before, during what Jack was going to remember as the 'most epic handjob everr.'

'You've had practice doing what I say,' Jack said, shifting across the bed to a drawer and pulling a black strip of fabric from it. 'When we trained. I ordered you around then.'

'Yes, but-'

'You know, for someone used to giving out orders all the time, you were super receptive to me telling you what to do.'

'Are you trying to insinuate something?' Gwyn said, sharp edges in every word.

Jack grinned and turned back to Gwyn. He moved back to him, folding the cloth carefully, Pitch's words loud in his head.

*You can use a blindfold, or a gag, but I'd advise against using both at the same time. And you must*

*watch him carefully.*

‘Lift your head up, please?’ Jack said.

Already, Jack could tell that Gwyn wasn’t going to like it. But Jack was patient. He moved Gwyn’s arms out of the way, and straddled his chest, looking down at him.

‘You can choose,’ Jack said. ‘Blindfold or gag. That’s it. Or you can say the word to stop all of this, and we’ll have a chat, and you’ll bail. Whatever works for you.’

‘For me,’ Gwyn said, staring at the cloth.

Jack leaned forwards, forearms coming down on either side of Gwyn’s head. The black cloth brushed against Gwyn’s ear on the right side, and on the left, Jack pressed his cheek to Gwyn’s. He heard the sound of legs shifting restlessly on the bed, ignored it, and instead touched his lips to the corner of Gwyn’s mouth.

‘Please pick one,’ Jack said.

Gwyn made a faint, disarmed sound. And then a harder one that seemed like sheer frustration.

‘*Fine*,’ Gwyn said. ‘Blindfold.’

‘You’re so *grumpy*,’ Jack said, smiling, as Gwyn lifted his head. Gwyn’s mouth was tight at the corners, and Jack frowned a little when Gwyn actually flinched back from the blindfold. It was almost tempting to change his mind, say it didn’t matter, but Pitch had said that this was part of it. Sometimes, he would do things that brushed up against genuine discomfort. Jack licked his lips, knowing that Gwyn couldn’t see him as he carefully tied the blindfold so that the knot wouldn’t press in too hard when Gwyn lowered his head. He’d practiced on Pitch at least ten times, before he’d been happy with it.

He shifted the edges of the blindfold carefully, making sure Gwyn couldn’t see anything more than little bits of light. He used that as an excuse to gently touch Gwyn’s face, to remind him that Jack wasn’t *really* going to do anything mean or hurtful. Smoothed his thumbs against Gwyn’s cheeks. Traced his index finger down the strong bridge of Gwyn’s nose.

Gwyn’s breathing was even, but Jack could tell it was a self-control thing, and not a ‘completely at ease’ thing.

‘Thank you,’ Jack said, and felt the way Gwyn tensed beneath his legs. ‘No, really. I’m- Still learning a lot of this, and you’re being patient with me.’

Gwyn’s forehead creased, and he opened his mouth to say something, and Jack casually rested the tips of his fingers at Gwyn’s lower lip. Then he placed his fingertips on Gwyn’s teeth and pressed down. Jack didn’t pull down much, just enough that he could keep Gwyn’s mouth open when he leaned forwards and licked into his mouth. A rise of tension in the muscles beneath him, and then they went almost lax, all at once.

A gust of air across Jack’s face from Gwyn’s nose, and then the faintest sound, like something that could have been a groan if Gwyn hadn’t cut it off.

All at once, Jack felt like he’d slipped back into the moment again. He slid one of his fingers into Gwyn’s mouth, alongside both of their tongues, and Jack felt the warmth of it and knew what it felt like to be on the receiving end of it, since Pitch had done it to him before. He hoped that Gwyn found it at least half as hot as Jack had. Judging from his reaction though, he did.

Jack slid his finger deeper, and then half because he wanted to see how Gwyn would react, and half because his cock was twitching at the thought of it, he mimicked the movements he'd use to open Gwyn up for him later.

Gwyn sucked in a breath through his nose, and then *definitely* held back a sound. Whatever it was, it was going to be awesome.

*No fair*, Jack thought. *I'm gonna find a way to get those too.*

Jack moved back, but slid a second finger into Gwyn's mouth, kept them there, still, resting on his tongue. He could feel that wet muscle shifting in tiny movements, as though Gwyn didn't know whether to move it, or stay still.

'Suck them,' Jack said. At that, Gwyn's tongue went still. 'Really? Are you gonna fight me for every little thing?'

Jack felt the grumbling sound in his fingers and laughed.

'Seriously? Why don't you just remember the time that Pitch got you to suck my cock, except- he didn't get you to, you basically *wanted*- oh, there it is, oh my god.'

Jack's eyes closed as Gwyn started sucking on his fingers, soft at first, and then harder, drawing Jack's fingers deeper into his mouth, until Jack could feel tightness against the back of his fingers. God, he remembered that too.

'You're just good at everything,' Jack said, without really thinking about it. Gwyn's breath hitched, and Jack reminded himself that he had to pay attention, but even as he opened his eyes, it seemed like Gwyn enjoyed the comment. His cheeks were flushed again. His arms were still by his sides, like Jack had ordered them there. 'You can touch me, if you want.'

He watched Gwyn's hands lift – uncertain – and Jack grasped one of Gwyn's wrists with his free hand, and drew it to Jack's thigh. Gwyn grasped with his fingers, curled blunt fingertips, and then just seemed to hold on. When Jack started moving both fingers back and forth in Gwyn's mouth, pushing deep each time, it felt like he'd pushed Gwyn's moan right out of him.

About a minute later, he withdrew his fingers with some reluctance, painting saliva back down onto Gwyn's chest. Fingers dug deeply enough into the muscles of his thighs, that Jack hissed. Gwyn's grip lightened immediately, and Jack wondered if Gwyn thought Jack was too gentle for this. Or too...something.

'How are you doing, so far?' Jack said, biting his top lip. Maybe if he was super confident, he wouldn't need to check in.

'I thought...there would be more,' Gwyn said. Just as Jack felt like he could never measure up to anyone else who did this kind of stuff, Gwyn said: 'I mean- I thought you'd...make me. With...tools. Or that you'd- I'm not sure. The few times this has ever happened, I was allowed to have an illusion of powerlessness.'

Jack shoved his own insecurities away and leaned closer to Gwyn, staring at his face, wondering if it was the blindfold that made it easier for Gwyn to open up like this.

'You can't have that with me?' Jack said.

He remembered Pitch saying: *Make him participate in his own undoing. Your style will not be one of force, which some people crave. It will be, in part, the humiliation of making him complicit in*

*his own submission.*

Jack would have sworn for a hundred years that he hated the idea of humiliation, and then Pitch had said *that* to him, and Jack had realised that humiliation was not just calling someone names, apparently. It was complex, and it was something that Jack actually kind of dug, when the situation called for it.

‘And then I thought,’ Gwyn continued, ‘that you couldn’t *make* me, and so- I wasn’t entirely sure what to expect. I don’t understand how you can do so much with so little. It’s only a blindfold.’

‘Yeah,’ Jack said. ‘I’m sure I have nothing to do with it at all.’

‘I didn’t mean-’

‘You can’t pretend you don’t want it, with me, can you?’ Jack said.

It was like Jack had grabbed on a loose thread and pulled it. He could feel the corresponding tension in Gwyn’s body, that Jack had just said it so baldly. Jack held his breath for a second, sure that Gwyn was about to leave or do *something*, but instead Gwyn just held still, so Jack went on.

‘Pitch never made it something to be ashamed of,’ Jack said. ‘So I...had my issues with it. Being who I am with him, but it was just always the most amazing thing. So I just eventually decided it was amazing, being the way I am. But I think this is amazing too. With you. And that’s a lot because of who you are.’

‘Gods,’ Gwyn muttered, his tone changing. Suddenly horribly dismissive. ‘I’m not doing this.’

Gwyn lifted up, and Jack grit his teeth together and placed both of his palms on Gwyn’s shoulders, pushing down hard. To his surprise, Gwyn went with it, thumping down onto the bed, mouth thinned, clearly unhappy. Jack dug his fingers down, until he knew it would ache.

‘You have a word,’ Jack said. ‘You have two. You can slow things down or make them stop. But you don’t get to decide that you’re not doing this just because something’s hard for you to hear. That’s disrespectful. I’m not disrespecting you, so why do you think it’s okay to shut me down like that?’

A long pause, and Jack could tell how hard this was for him. Jack didn’t *really* feel disrespected at all. He’d been expecting something like this all along. He’d been planning his responses to it. And it wasn’t until it happened, that Jack knew exactly what he was going to say. But he knew Gwyn was struggling, and he waited, wondering if Pitch would nod at him with approval if he was there, or shake his head in that minute way that indicated Jack had mis-stepped.

‘I apologise,’ Gwyn said finally.

Jack tipped forwards until he could tuck his head next to Gwyn’s.

‘Yeah, I’m also sorry that this is totally not hot.’

A pause, where Gwyn seemed to hold his breath, and then he laughed. A moment later, his arms came up and wrapped around Jack’s back, holding him in place.

‘You’re very quick to sell yourself short,’ Gwyn said.

‘Yeah, oh yeah, no, wait, I can’t wait to tell Pitch that you were the reassuring one.’

‘You’ve been quite reassuring,’ Gwyn said. ‘That is somewhat the problem, you know that, don’t you?’

‘No?’ Jack said, trying to pull back and stare at Gwyn, only for Gwyn’s arms to tighten.

*Yeah, yeah, fine.*

Jack thought it over, and belatedly realised that Gwyn had said he wasn’t doing this right after Jack had praised him. Jack *knew* that was an issue, but he’d not realised that it was so glaring. Such a huge thing. He squeezed his eyes shut, because...he’d had the same issue, hadn’t he? With Pitch. He wanted to be told so many nice things about himself, but when Pitch had started doing just that, he was so unused to it. The words were like tiny knives, flaying him, making him hypersensitive to whatever blow would fall next.

Three hundred years of being mostly alone and unseen, and it had left Jack with that. Gwyn was... at least a few thousand years old, and Jack thought he could suddenly appreciate what it meant that Gwyn was still like this.

‘Maybe kind of,’ Jack added. ‘I kind of knew. But I’m not gonna stop. I might cross a line with it sometimes, and I know you find it hard. I get that probably more than you realise.’

‘Ah.’

‘I get that it’s private,’ Jack added, and felt relieved when Gwyn’s arms held him closer, instead of pushing him away.

‘I thought there’d be ropes,’ Gwyn said, and Jack found himself laughing at the segue.

‘There can be ropes,’ Jack said. ‘I learned some basic ties and stuff.’

‘There don’t *have* to be ropes, I just thought there would be ropes.’

‘So you *have* been thinking about it,’ Jack said with some satisfaction. ‘Imagining what I’d be doing to you?’

‘Oh,’ Gwyn said. ‘No- I- I mean not *today*.’

‘Did you imagine me inside you?’ Jack said. ‘Because I’ve been imagining that a *lot*.’

‘You-’

‘Also? For the record? I kind of dig how flustered you get talking about this stuff.’

*‘Honestly.’*

‘I’m being super honest,’ Jack said, ignoring the exasperation and pretending it was a genuine question. ‘Did you imagine me inside you? Fucking you?’

A long pause, and Gwyn turned his head away from Jack’s. After a long beat, he nodded like he was revealing some huge secret. Jack could have leapt up and whooped but he’d already killed the mood *plenty*, and he wasn’t about to do it more.

‘What was I like?’ Jack said. ‘How did you imagine me?’

‘Can I take the blindfold off?’ Gwyn said.



‘Nope.’

‘I didn’t imagine you being quite this annoying, which was my mistake,’ Gwyn said. ‘I’m not sure why, given I’ve *met* you.’

Jack grinned, leaned down, and closed his teeth around the cartilage at the top of Gwyn’s ear. Then bit down slowly, the pressure getting harder until Gwyn’s arms tensed around him. Only then did Jack let go. He licked over the skin instead, and Gwyn shuddered.

‘So how did you imagine me?’ Jack said.

‘I don’t really...know,’ Gwyn said, sounding genuinely confused. ‘But this is better. Than what I imagined.’

‘It’s because of the handjob, isn’t it? You’ve come already, so you’re feeling like this is going pretty well.’

Gwyn smiled against Jack’s skin.

‘I wasn’t actually going to tie you up,’ Jack said. ‘Give a guy a chance to start out simple. But since you thought there were going to be ropes...’

‘I said there didn’t *have* to be,’ Gwyn said, and Jack laughed.

‘No, you said you thought there were going to be ropes. You can’t take it back. You just have to be patient- I can’t make it pretty like Pitch does.’

‘Because that’s what I clearly care about most. How *pretty* something is.’

Jack moved back, and then shifted off Gwyn’s body, making sure to keep in contact with him as he moved to the drawers beside the bed. There were a few coils of rope. Some shears in case Jack couldn’t get through the rope and Gwyn panicked – though as Pitch said, realistically Gwyn could just *break* the rope if he truly panicked. There was lube, and not much else. Jack wanted to get the hang of what dominating someone even *meant*, before he used all the accessories. It was kind of intimidating, when Pitch had thrown out a whole lot of different things Jack could do, and Jack had realised that he mostly just wanted to fuck Gwyn, and be in control of it, and that was about it.

Pitch had smiled at Jack’s embarrassment and simply said: *Jack, it was all I ever really wanted with you. The accessories just make it more fun in the future, if that’s something you want.*

‘Are you really going to tie me up?’ Gwyn said, sounding not *quite* nervous. Jack grinned to himself, drawing everything out. Might as well have the lube now too.

‘I want you to put your arms above your head, and cross them at the wrists.’

Jack was already uncoiling the rope, and he was surprised when Gwyn did it. There was a pause, sure, but then he just *did it*. Jack touched Gwyn’s arm first, to let him know where he was, and then began wrapping the rope around his wrists. He couldn’t do it as neatly as Pitch, but he’d learned the knots well enough, and he knew to make sure that it wasn’t pulling too tightly on any nerves, or pressing into any known sore spots. By the end of it, Jack was pretty impressed with it, and he watched Gwyn gently twisting against the loops of white with some satisfaction.

And then Jack exercised an immense amount of self-control to not just tickle Gwyn like crazy, to see what would happen. Probably murder.

Jack settled back, straddling Gwyn's hips and pressing his hands flat to warm skin. He reached up and smooth his palms down, stroking Gwyn's nipples at the same time. He could tell Gwyn had no idea what to do. He didn't just relax into it, or get all lazy-happy at being touched like this. Jack practically started purring whenever Pitch treated him like this, but in the beginning, it had been very different. Gentle touching was weird, and Jack wondered if Gwyn just didn't like it, or if he wasn't used to it.

He didn't want to ruin this moment with words though. The touches could speak for themselves. Jack leaned down sometimes and kissed his way over Gwyn's skin. He drew little spirals and imagined it was his frost, even as he kept it under very tight control; Pitch might not mind it, but Gwyn did.

Eventually, Gwyn's arms relaxed, and his fingers settled into a loose curl. His mouth lost some tension. Jack kissed him, even as he pinched both of Gwyn's nipples and twisted a little. A gasp, and Jack smiled.

'Good?' Jack said.

Gwyn didn't answer, and Jack stroked fingertips over them again, and then pinched them harder than he would have liked for himself. Gwyn grunted, his whole body tensing. Jack kept up that tight grip, and watched in amazement as Gwyn's neck flushed. His mouth opened, he tried to catch his breath. Jack knew he wasn't a sadist, not like Pitch could be. But he also got *why* people found this hot. There was a space between them where it wasn't just pain and it wasn't just pleasure. Gwyn clearly got something out of it.

Jack eased his grip, and then bent down and captured one nipple between his teeth. He didn't bite – not yet – felt Gwyn's shoulders shifting, wrists twisting, and knew it was probably a mix of anticipation and dread. And then he bit down, slowly, increasing the pressure bit by bit, until Gwyn moaned. That sound...almost like when Pitch had fucked him, like Jack was beginning to find what he wanted to find all along. Jack licked over the sore flesh and transferred his mouth to the other one, biting down with less warning.

Gwyn cried out, his arms lowered – Jack hadn't secured them to anything after all – and Jack felt wrists tied with rope nudging at the top of his head. Jack lifted up.

'Can you put your arms back above your head, please?' Jack said, then waited.

'It's...'

'What, painful? I know,' Jack said. 'Can you put your hands back above your head?'

Jack sat back up, waited, and turned to look over his shoulder. Gwyn was half-hard again. Jack turned back, and watched as Gwyn hesitantly raised his arms above his head once more. Jack thought about securing them to the headboard, but he didn't want that kind of restriction. He liked it better when Gwyn agreed to it. Liked the feeling of reminding him, almost constantly, that he wanted this too. Even the pain.

But as a reward, Jack went back to stroking his skin. Soothing at his sides, marvelling at the lack of blemishes. Aside from that tiny scar, there was nothing. It was almost like Gwyn carried no signs of what he'd ever experienced. It was unnerving. Even Pitch – who healed better than most – still carried scars with him.

Jack moved down Gwyn's body, curling his fingers around Gwyn's cock and squeezing, kind of loving the way Gwyn's arms jerked, his mouth opening as though to say something. Jack was

pretty sure he was sensitive, and when he let go, he dragged the backs over his fingernails over the head of Gwyn's cock.

Gwyn lowered his crossed, bound wrists until they covered his face.

Jack smiled, grasped Gwyn's cock again, and stroked over one of his nipples. He watched the way Gwyn's chest rose and fell unevenly, and smirked when his breath hitched as Jack reached down and stroked his fingers over Gwyn's balls. The skin there was velvety, soft, and Jack shifted so that he was in between Gwyn's legs, moving them apart.

Gwyn had lifted his arms slightly, as though he wanted to see what Jack was doing. Except he couldn't, because of the blindfold.

'Are my fingers too cold?' Jack said, reaching for the lubricant. He knew he could slide his fingers into Gwyn's mouth, but even just constantly touching Gwyn made him warmer.

'No- I- What are you-?'

Gwyn's words died as Jack pressed lubricant slick fingers to the space behind Gwyn's balls, lightly pressing in and then dragging down. The angle wasn't great, but it was enough for what Jack needed.

'What do you think I'm doing?' Jack said.

'I can't believe I'm letting you do this,' Gwyn said, his arms dropping back above his head.

'Me either,' Jack said, biting his lower lip and moving his fingers back and forth. Nothing too invasive – not yet – he could already see this was hard for Gwyn. His fingers were clenched until they were white-knuckled.

'You could just get on with it,' Gwyn added.

'I suppose I could,' Jack said, without speeding up at all.

After Gwyn made a grunted sound of frustration, Jack took Gwyn's cock with his other hand and began jerking him off. He didn't bother with lube on that hand, and the sticky, soft skin caught on his fingers. Gwyn twisted, his breathing audible, and Jack began lightly pressing against Gwyn's hole. Not going in, but testing the muscle there, letting his fingers warm up more.

Jack wished he had more hands. One day he'd do this with Pitch, and then he'd be able to make sure that one of them was touching Gwyn's hair, or his mouth, and probably his nipples too. Maybe they needed more than four hands for that. But Jack was acutely aware of how much more he wanted to be doing, even as it was plain that Gwyn was finding it harder to hang onto that grumpiness. His breathing more abandoned, and Jack expecting some huge protest and not actually getting it at all.

The tip of his finger slid into heat, and Gwyn tensed immediately. Jack hushed him, but didn't stop, pressing deeper. He was always amazed at how it felt, how intimate, and as Jack withdrew a little and pushed back in, he thought how intense it would feel when his cock was actually inside him.

Gwyn made a faint humming noise, like he wasn't quite sure, and Jack paused and slowed his hand down where it still moved over Gwyn's cock.

'This okay?' Jack said.

‘It’s...’ A long pause, and Jack almost withdrew completely. But he could see the flush on Gwyn’s skin, feel how hard Gwyn was in his palm, and knew that whatever was happening, Gwyn’s arousal was still strong. ‘I’ve only ever been sober for this once before. And this is nothing like... that time, either.’

Jack let go of Gwyn’s cock to rub the muscles of his thigh as soothingly as he could. He kept his touch firm, his ice under control, and Gwyn took a few quick breaths, and then seemed to relax a bit more.

*I’ve only ever been sober for this once before.*

Whatever that meant, Jack didn’t think it sounded great. He waited, kept caressing Gwyn, kept the finger that was inside of him still. He could feel warmth seeping through into the rest of his hand.

‘I didn’t think you’d be so kind,’ Gwyn said, eventually.

‘You...still wanted to do this, even though you didn’t think I’d be that *kind*?’ Jack said, and then he laughed weakly and pressed his head to Gwyn’s bent knee. ‘You know, some time in the future I’m sure this will happen without us having these conversations in the middle of it, but right now, that’s- We’ve gotta talk about this at some point.’

‘Not now, hopefully,’ Gwyn said, sounding a little strained.

‘So it really is okay?’

‘I said so,’ Gwyn said, more of that stubbornness entering his voice. ‘Didn’t I?’

Jack rolled his eyes, and pressed a kiss to the inside of Gwyn’s leg, and then with the hand that had been stroking his thigh, he made his way back to Gwyn’s cock. He circled his fingers at the base, then gripped firmly and jacked him off. It was tempting to go slow, but Gwyn’s hips thrust up, and Jack used the better anger to slide his finger deeper. As deep as it could go.

Gwyn cried out, and Jack nodded to himself, chose to fall back into his own arousal, and began moving his finger back and forth. Gwyn was tight around him, and warm, and there was enough lubricant that after a minute, Jack pressed back in with two fingers and enjoyed making that furl of muscle stretch around his fingers. It was like he was making Gwyn yield to him, and the sounds that Gwyn was making only reflected that.

‘This angle is the worst though,’ Jack added, as his wrist started to cramp. He slid his fingers free, let go of Gwyn’s cock, and then urged him onto his stomach – moving out from between his legs to make it easier. Gwyn went without saying a word, and Jack realised how surprising that was afterwards, when he was already in the process of pulling Gwyn’s hips up. Not much, not enough that Gwyn would be on his knees, but enough that Jack could reach beneath if he wanted to and check to see if Gwyn was still hard.

‘This is undignifying,’ Gwyn added, but he didn’t seem all that bothered.

‘Totally,’ Jack agreed. ‘It took me forever to get used to it. But look. Access.’

Jack was careful about sliding his fingers back in, and then groaned when he realised that he could get much deeper than before and was momentarily distracted imagining what that would feel like when he was actually inside of him. He pressed his fingers down towards Gwyn’s belly, curled them back towards himself, and Gwyn whimpered. Actually *whimpered*. Gwyn’s fingers splayed, then tensed, then interlocked with each other. His whole body tensed, and Jack repeated the gesture and watched Gwyn practically squirm as though to get away or push back, like he couldn’t decide.

‘God,’ Jack whispered. He leaned up, rested his free hand on Gwyn’s back and dug his fingers in. He moved his other hand faster, caring less about opening Gwyn up for him, and more about getting those reactions.

He got them. Gwyn braced himself on his tied wrists, head hanging down. His lower back dipped into an arch. Jack moaned softly, because it turned out he liked this way more than he thought he would.

‘You’re so hot,’ Jack said, and then almost laughed to himself because it was such a stupid thing to say. ‘It feels like you were always meant to be like this, with me. Do you feel that too?’

Gwyn made some half-frustrated, half-wanting sound, which Jack couldn’t really interpret. But it sounded way less like ‘Yes’ and way more like ‘You want to talk about this *now*?’

Jack kept going, because Gwyn unable to give him clear answers felt pretty good, it turned out. He kept moving his fingers – spreading them, twisting them, pulling them all the way out and then shoving back in once he knew that Gwyn could handle it – until Gwyn wasn’t able to keep his sounds back anymore. Until Jack knew he could’ve pushed his cock into him already, but was too busy trying to take Gwyn apart to really care about that. The couple of times he checked how hard Gwyn was, he half-worried that Gwyn might come before Jack even got a chance to push inside of him, and almost didn’t care. Imagine that, making Gwyn come only on his fingers.

Maybe next time.

When he withdrew his fingers, Gwyn made a low, lost sound, and Jack hushed him. More lube, and he wrapped his fingers around himself and hissed at how warm they were. At how sensitive he was.

‘Jack,’ Gwyn said, voice hushed, like he wasn’t even aware of saying it.

‘Just making sure I don’t freeze you to death,’ Jack said, rubbing his hand along Gwyn’s calf, the inside of his thigh, and then reaching around to fondle his cock. Not even bringing him off, just touching, feeling the way Gwyn’s muscles trembled sometimes, the way he leaned into Jack’s touch.

Those small, desperate movements were too much. It wasn’t like Jack was a master at this kind of stuff. If he didn’t get inside Gwyn soon, he was probably going to come all over Gwyn instead. And maybe they’d both like that, but Jack kind of had a *plan*. It wasn’t much of a plan, but he definitely wanted to stick to it.

He shifted up onto his knees, squeezing the base of himself to try and get more control over the heat and shivery intensity that made it hard to concentrate. Gwyn was mostly lying down, hips still up just a little, the angle was good.

Jack bent over Gwyn, notching himself in place and distantly prepared for some kind of protest. Wasn’t this when Gwyn was supposed to panic? Or were they past that now? Jack had no idea what to expect, and was almost dazed with his own need. It was hard to stay in control of himself. This was the point where he’d normally surrender to Pitch. Now, instead, it was Gwyn who was pliant beneath him, muscles shifting beneath his fingers, and Jack had to close his eyes for a second and stay present, stay focused.

‘I’m reaching the limits of my patience,’ Gwyn said, voice muffled, half-pressed into the bed.

‘Oh my god,’ Jack exclaimed, laughing. With that, he pushed in, going still as soon as Gwyn froze.

‘You’re okay. Are you okay?’

Gwyn made some unintelligible response which probably wasn’t even supposed to be words. But the tension didn’t fade, and Jack didn’t think he was hurting Gwyn, but maybe it was just...the difference between wanting and reality.

‘You’re okay,’ Jack said again, soothing him with his hands, trembling with the need to just push as deep as possible even as he held himself back. ‘You should- you should say something, Gwyn. What’s going on? Or if you can’t say something, can you just nod if you’re okay for me to...go, and shake your head if you’re not?’

A pause, and then Gwyn nodded his head, groaned softly, and maybe Jack should’ve waited, but instead his hips bucked forward until skin was pressed to skin. He grabbed Gwyn’s hips and cried out, voice mingling with Gwyn’s.

Jack instinctively shoved the heel of his palm into the small of Gwyn’s back, to keep his back dipped. He withdrew about an inch before sinking back in, feeling like he was drowning in heat. His head dropped forward, and with his other hand, he reached around and grasped Gwyn’s cock and rode the undulation that followed, as though Gwyn couldn’t handle what he was being made to feel.

*Okay, okay, this is so good. Oh my god.*

Maybe there was some magic timing to it, Pitch’s ability to make sure Jack came just before he came, but Jack didn’t care. He started moving, first with deep, small thrusts, and then longer ones when he came to trust that Gwyn was fine – if kind of falling apart beneath him, which wasn’t doing his need to come any favours at all. Jack panted for breath, caught up between wanting to memorise everything about what was happening, and too busy being right in the middle of it to memorise anything at all. It was a blur, Gwyn’s half-broken noises between his rough breaths, and Jack trying to keep track of too many things at once, even as he felt his balls draw up, as he felt his gut clench, that familiar pull in the base of his spine.

He squeezed Gwyn’s cock harder than he meant to, a reflex as he keened through the sensation of it, and Gwyn made a sharp noise into blankets. His tied wrists thumped onto the pillows before him and he jerked forwards. Jack felt a brief wave of relief when he realised Gwyn was coming, quickly washed away by knowing he was only a few seconds behind.

Jack’s thoughts vanished as he came, disappearing into the sensation of it. It was only towards the end that he realised he’d lost control of his ice, frost having skittered down Gwyn’s hips. Jack rubbed it away without thinking, and made sure that he didn’t collapse on top of Gwyn, catching himself with a shaking arm. Aftershocks found him, and he stayed inside Gwyn for them, rocking forwards every few seconds, and Gwyn moaning softly each time.

Instead of the sleepiness he kind of expected, he was overcome with a softness, a sense of wanting to show Gwyn through gestures how much he appreciated what had happened. It started with kissing his way along the back of Gwyn’s spine, and then his cock slipping free so that he could drape himself over Gwyn’s body and tangle his fingers in Gwyn’s hair, which was sweaty at the base, his scalp so warm.

They were messy, sticky, and Jack didn’t care. He hoped Gwyn didn’t mind. Because it was nice to feel the rise and fall of his own body as Gwyn breathed. To touch the blindfold and the ropes, the tips of his relaxed fingers, and stroke those curls in any direction he liked.

‘Thank you,’ Jack said, about ten minutes later, as Gwyn’s breathing turned deep and slow, and

Jack wondered if he was falling asleep. He shifted so that he could start undoing the tie in the ropes at Gwyn's wrists.

'I can't believe I let you do that,' Gwyn said, his voice rough, deeper than before. He didn't sound at all put out. Or even all that surprised.

'Can you believe you're going to let me do it again?' Jack said. 'I mean not *today*, but like, at some point?'

'No,' Gwyn said, as the ropes loosened around his wrists. There were some red marks, but nothing looked bad, even as Jack rubbed over the grooves in his skin. 'Maybe.'

'I want you to be a part of my life,' Jack said. Gwyn didn't say anything to that, and Jack kissed the soft space behind Gwyn's ear. 'I mean it.'

'I think...I want to be a part of yours,' Gwyn said. Jack smiled, wrapped his arms around Gwyn's shoulders.

'And sometimes to just hang out,' Jack said. 'We need to talk more.'

*You need to talk to someone, and for some reason, I'm not sure if it's gonna be Pitch.*

'Would you train with me sometimes?' Gwyn asked, and the hope in his voice was almost painful. Jack wondered if it made it easier for Gwyn to relate to people, or be around them, if he could hide behind a sword and training manoeuvres. Whatever. Jack knew that side of Gwyn pretty well, and he wasn't afraid of it anymore.

'Yeah,' Jack said. 'Maybe all three of us?'

'Yes,' Gwyn said. 'I'd like that. But the two of us?'

'You think you'd still let me be in charge of training?' Jack said, laughing a little. 'But maybe you would, because you're pretty good at following orders from me.'

Gwyn squirmed a little, and Jack petted Gwyn gently, and felt Gwyn's heart beating against his own chest. He wondered what kind of fae Gwyn would be if he'd never been King.

'Although not *that* good,' Jack added. 'You top from the bottom.'

'That's- Does that matter?' Gwyn said. 'Should I not?'

'Oh,' Jack said, thinking about it, 'you know, actually, it's fine? You're not used to this yet, and I'm finding my way through it, and I think it's way more important that we're both comfortable instead of following any 'rules' about how this is supposed to go. You wouldn't be you if you didn't sort of...I dunno, Gwyn. You still let me do a lot.'

'I suppose I did,' Gwyn said.

Jack worked at the knot of the blindfold, and then carefully slid it free. It felt damp on the inside, and Jack wondered if that was sweat or tears, and then decided it didn't really matter, because Gwyn seemed pretty okay now.

'You should take a shower with me,' Jack said. 'It's big enough. But I can't have the water that hot.'

'When I go on campaigns, freezing cold lakes or rivers or oceans are often all I had to bathe in. Hot

water is lovely, but not necessary.'

Jack wondered what he'd tell Pitch later. He knew already that Pitch would be okay with it, be accepting, only want to hear what Jack wanted to say, and be ready with an embrace and nothing less than love. None of this seemed as scary as it did before. Jack felt like something had slotted into place, a piece of a puzzle he'd overlooked.

'You don't mind if we wait like ten or twenty minutes before the shower though? This is kind of nice,' Jack added.

'I'm not moving,' Gwyn said, 'for at *least* that long.'

Jack chuckled and liked lying on Gwyn this way. He kissed Gwyn's skin, sometimes licking, sometimes pressing his lips lightly down, tiny butterfly kisses. He fussed with his hair, laced his fingers through Gwyn's and felt no need to talk. It was – after all the hiccups along the way – surprisingly natural. Like they could have been like this all along. Jack knew that this wouldn't be the last time at all. That this was only the beginning, like opening a door on a new vista, and knowing there was so much left to explore.

Jack closed his eyes and smiled to himself, and couldn't stop himself from thinking: *Nailed it.*

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